HENRY WHARTON. A.M.

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FOURTEEN SERMONS

Preach'd in

LAMBETH CHAPEL.

BEFORE

The most Reverend Father in God Dr. WILLIAM SANCROFT, late Lord Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*.

In the Years

MDCLXXXVIII. MDCLXXXIX.

By the Learned HENRY WHARTON, M.A. Chaplain to His Grace.

With an Account of

The Author's LIFE.

The Second Edition Corrected.

LONDON:

Printed for Ri. Chiswell at the *Rose* and *Crown* in St. *Pauls Church Yard*. 1700.

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Dr. Benj. Avery.

THE LIFE OF Mr. *Hen. Wharton.*

MR. Henry Wharton *was Born* November *the* 9*th.* 1664. *at* Worſtead, *in* Norfolk, *of which Pariſh his Father, the Learned Mr.* Edmund Wharton, *was then Vicar, and is now the worthy Rector of* Saxlingham *in the ſame County.*

His Education was under his Father; who obſerving in his Son a great inclination to Learning, even in his tender years, and withal a happy Conjunction of moſt excellent natural Parts, gave his utmoſt diligence to cheriſh the one, and improve the other; and did ſo throughly inſtruct him in the Latin *and* Greek *Tongues, that at his entrance into the* Univerſity, *he had the Reputation of an extraordinary young Man.*

On the 17*th of* Feb. *in the Year* 16$\frac{72}{73}$. *and of his Age the Sixteenth, he was admitted Penſioner into* Gonvil *and* Caius College

in Cambridge; (*whereof his Father had formerly been Fellow*) *under the Care and Tuition of Mr.* John Ellys, *one of the Senior Fellows of the ſame; a Perſon of eminent Learning, ſingular Piety and ſtrictneſs of Life; and one who has deſerved very well of the Publick, for his unwearied Pains and moſt exact diligence in the Education and Government of Youth.*

From his firſt admiſſion into the College he purſued his Studies with an indefatigable Induſtry, (ſeldom ſpending leſs than twelve hours a day at them:) By the means of which, and that excellent Foundation of Grammar Learning which he had brought along with him, and the advantage of a very good Memory and Judgment, he improved himſelf much in a little time: having alſo read thro' moſt of the Claſſick Authors, *particularly the Hiſtorians both* Greek *and* Latin, *beſides divers conſiderable Writers in* Engliſh. *He attained likewiſe a good Underſtanding in the* French *Tongue, a large Proficiency in* Philoſophy, *and no mean Skill in* Mathematicks. *Which laſt was much encreaſed by the kindneſs of Mr.* Iſaac Newton, *Fellow of* Trinity College, *the incomparable* Lucas-Profeſſor *of* Mathematicks *in the Univerſity, who was pleaſed to give him further inſtructions in that noble*

Science,

Science, amongſt a ſelect Company in his own private Chamber.

At Michaelmas. *in the Year* 1680 *he was admitted* Scholar of the Houſe, *being unanimouſly choſen by the Fellows into one of thoſe Scholarſhips which had been founded by his great Uncle Mr.* Matthew Stokys, *formerly Senior Fellow of the ſaid College: The profits of which he continued to receive until* Michaelmas 1687. *which was the utmoſt the Statutes could permit, and was a favour ſeldom granted to Non-reſidents, as he was for ſome part of the time.*

The ordinary performances of his Fellow Pupils were in no meaſure agreeable to his eager Endeavours; who, beſides what he did in common with them, did every night (at leaſt after two years ſtanding in the Univerſity) make ſome exerciſe or other extraordinary, and gave his Tutor an account of ſome conſiderable Book read that day.

As his Pains was thus very great, and above that of any of his Equals in ſtanding, ſo was his Proficiency in all ſorts of Learning anſwerably conſpicuous to all, when ever he appear'd in Publick; inſomuch that at his Commencing Bachelour of Arts *in* Hilary Term, 168¾. *he had deſervedly the firſt place given him by the then Proctor of the* Uni-

verſity, *the Learned Mr.* Will. Needham, *Fellow of* Emmanuel College; *afterwards his dear Friend and Fellow-Chaplain at* Lambeth, *and now the worthy Rector of* Arlesford *in* Hampſhire.

He continued Reſident in the College till about Our Lady, 1686. *When, obſerving no likelihood of the Vacancy of any Fellowſhip therein; or if any ſhould fall, that there were always ſeveral of his Seniors continuing there who had juſt Pretences before him, he entertain'd thoughts of retiring to ſome other place; whither we will immediately follow him, after having only obſerved, that during his ſtay here, he was in all his Converſation exemplary for Sobriety and good Government of himſelf, and innocent and obliging in his Behaviour, duly obſervant of College Orders, and conſtant in frequenting the* Prayers *and* Sacraments *in the Chapel.*

His worthy Friend the Reverend Doctor Barker, *then Senior Fellow of the ſame College (afterwards Chaplain to the late moſt Reverend Arch-Biſhop* Tillotſon, *and now Rector of* Braſtead *in* Kent) *being acquainted with his deſign of withdrawing from thence, thought the greateſt Kindneſs he could do him, was to help him to the Converſation of the beſt Men and the beſt Books,*

Books, which he very well knew him ſo admirably prepar'd for.

A happy Opportunity therefore quickly offering it ſelf, he recommended him to the Reverend Doctor Cave, a Perſon whom the Learned World, both at home and abroad, deſervedly has in great Veneration for his excellent Writings. Here was now the nobleſt opportunity of Improvement for this young Man, that himſelf could have deſired, or his Friends could have wiſht. For, beſides the advantage of a free acceſs to a Library, full of the choiceſt and beſt Books, and the benefit of ſo Learned and ſo Communicative a Converſation, this Learned perſon was then employ'd in compiling that elaborate Work of his, called Hiſtoria Literaria. A Work which required ſuch vaſt Pains, in reading, digeſting, and reducing into order ſuch an infinite number of the antient Monuments of Learning, as it could hardly have been brought to the Perfection wherein it now appears, in the Age of any one Man, without the aſſiſtance of Friends, of whom therefore the Learned Doctor thought it not in the leaſt Derogatory from his own performance to make a moſt grateful mention in his Prolegomena. Wherein alſo he is pleas'd to obſerve, with its due Praiſe, the more than ordinary aſſiſtance which

which he received from Mr. Wharton i
composing that Work: And then acknow
ledges the Appendix *of the three last Centu*
ries, to be almost wholly owing to him
which do therefore deservedly bear his Nam
himself being then afflicted with a dange
rous Sickness, which hinder'd him from pro
secuting his Design any further at th
time.

While he lived with this Excellent Per
son, *partly that he might be further assis*
ing to his Great and Learned Friend, an
partly for the satisfaction of others, that we
very desirous of having him enter into Ho
ly Orders, *who was likely to prove so gre*
an Ornament of the Church, in the Ye
1687. *he went into the* Holy Order of
Deacon.

At the Commencement in July *following*
he proceeded Master of Arts, *by the help*
a Proxy; which favour was by the Univer
sity *indulg'd to him, he at that time layin*
ill of the Small-Pox at Islington, *which dan*
ger he very hardly escaped.

About this time, the Reputation which h
had gain'd upon several Accounts, recom
mended him to the particular notice of D
Tenison, *the then worthy Vicar of St.* Mar
tins, *and now most Reverend* Arch-bisho
of Canterbury: *Who having in h*
han

hand a Manuſcript *concerning* the incurable Scepticiſm of the Roman Church, *written in Latin, and after a Scholaſtical manner by Mr.* John Placet *of* Hamburgh, *deſired Mr.* Wharton *to Epitomize it in a plain way of Argumentation, and to tranſlate it into Engliſh, which was in a very ſhort time perform'd by him.*

Not long after this, he was by the ſame Eminent Perſon *recommended to the* Lord Arundel *of* Trerice, *as a fit Tutor for the Education of his only Son. In which Truſt he acquitted himſelf to the great Satisfaction of that Noble Lord, who gave him a very honourable Allowance while with him, and ever after retain'd a particular eſteem for him as long as he lived; though he was pleaſed, at the requeſt of the moſt Reverend Archbiſhop* Sancroft, *to part with him to be his Chaplain.*

Next came forth a Treatiſe called Speculum Eccleſiaſticum, *writ by a Papiſt Soldier, which Mr.* Wharton *conſidered, and refuted the falſe Reaſonings and Quotations of it, with that quickneſs, that in the ſpace of one day only, he both begun and finiſhed that Diſcourſe: Adding thereto, by way of Preface, two further Anſwers; the Firſt to the Defender of the* Speculum, *(for having got a view of the Defence while it was*

in

in the Press, his Answer to it came out as soon or sooner than the Book it self) and the Second to the half sheet against the Six Conferences.

Times now grew warm, and the Papists began to be very confident of their Cause, insomuch that there was a fear, and accordingly Care taken about some choice Manuscripts, lest they should unhappily fall into the Enemies hand. Hereupon in Nov. 1687. *Mr.* Wharton *was requested by several eminent Divines in* London *to go down to* Cambridge, *and transcribe such Manuscripts as were of better Note: Which, so far as the time permitted, he performed by the assistance of the Worthy Mr.* Cory, *and* Mr. Sagg, *two of the then Fellows of* Corpus Christi College, *and of the Learned Mr.* John Laughton *the* University Library-Keeper.

At his return from thence he Printed one of them, Intituled, The Rule of Faith, *writ before the* Reformation, (*about the Year* 1450.) *by* Reginald Peacock *Bishop of* Chichester, *to which he joined a large and learned Preface, proving the Holy Scriptures to be the adequate Rule of Faith.*

After these came out his own Treatise Of the Celibacy of the Clergy, *wherein he shewed such sharpness of Wit, clearness*

of

of Reasoning, and vastness of Reading, as mightily rais'd his Esteem among all. The Learned especially had extraordinary thoughts of him, that a Person so young, having hardly yet exceeded Twenty three years of Age, should be able to compose such exquisite Works, and to write such excellent Discourses as he had done.

This and his other ingenious and learned Performances extorted Commendations of him even from the Romanists *themselves, who took no small Pains to bring him over to their side. To this end, Mr.* Matthews *the Priest, (who privately said Mass in* Windsor-Castle*) had a Conference with him, and was, or at least might have been convinc'd, by his Discourse, that he was not likely to make him a* Proselyte.

Others in like manner tried their Skill, and the most excellent of the Popish *Pieces were sent him out of* France, *in hopes to prevail upon him, but he remain'd immoveable. For, (to use his own expression)* Quo magis, *says he,* Pontificiorum Scripta pervolvi, eo leviora ac futiliora illorum argumenta mihi semper visa sunt; *The more have read their Writings, the more weak and vain, the lighter and more trifling did their Arguments always appear to me.*

What their weaker Arguments fail'd in,

his

his own more solid perform'd, reducing one of excellent Parts to our Communion, which he had in his younger Years been unhappily prevail'd upon to desert; who, in Testimony of the reality of his Conversion, receiv'd from his Hands the Blessed Sacrament at St. Martin's *Church, leaving a* Schedule *of his* Abjuration of Popery, *in the hands of the Reverend Dr.* Tenison, *then Vicar there, with whom it may possibly still remain.*

But to return to his Works. In the forementioned year he translated out of French into English Monsieur Dellon's History of the Inquisition of *Goa, giving an account of the horrid Cruelties exercised therein.*

About the same time also it was, that he turn'd some Homilies of St. Macarius, *the Prologue and the Epilogue of* Eunomius *his* Apologetick Treatise *(formerly transcribed by him out of a Manuscript of the Rev. Dr.* Tenison*) with a Treatise of* Pseudo-Dorotheus, *found by the Learned Mr.* Dodwell *in the* Bodleian *Library, out of Greek into Latin, and the famous Bull in* Cœna Domini *out of Latin into English, annexing a short Preface, containing some Reflections upon the* Bull, *and Animadversions on the late account of the Proceedings of the Parliament of* Paris.

He

He offered his assistance likewise to a new Edition of Dr. James's Corruption of the Scriptures, Councils *and* Fathers, by the Prelates of the Church of *Rome* for the maintenance of Popery, *which being a bad Cause, was not to be supported by fair and honest Methods. And at the request of Mr.* Watts, *he reviewed the Version of* Philalethe *and* Philirene, *fitting it for the Press.*

Immediately after these he publish'd his Enthusiasme of the Church of Rome; *wherein from the Examples of some of her most illustrious Saints, and more especially of those* Three, *from whom* Three *of the chiefest* Orders *among them have their Denomination, of* Jesuits, Dominicans, *and* Franciscans, *he does most evidently make it appear, that their great* Founders, *whom they so much admir'd while living, and now highly reverence when dead, were in truth no other than wild and extravagant* Fanaticks.

Upon the 12*th of* April, 1688. *the then most Reverend Archbishop of* Canterbury, Dr. Sancroft *sent for him to* Lambeth, *and put into his hand Arch-bishop* Ushers Dogmatical History of the Holy Scriptures *in Manuscript, with a Command to Transcribeit and publish it; which he in a few Months perform'd; bestowing great Pains thereon,*

thereon, in ſupplying what was imperfect, digeſting into Order what was confuſed, and amending what was leſs accurate; the iniquity of thoſe times not having permitted the Learned Author to put his laſt hand to it. And then added thereto a large Supplement, *wherein he produces innumerable Teſtimonies for the ſame Argument, from the* firſt Ages *of the Church ſucceſſively and in Order, to the Year* 1520.

In May *following, by the Advice of Dr* Teniſon, *he put out Biſhop* Ridley's *Treatiſe concerning the* Euchariſt, *together with ſome choice* Excerpta *out of Biſhop* Poinet Diallacticum.

In June *the ſame Year, though as yet no more than* Deacon, *he was honoured by the* Archbiſhop *with a* Licence of Preaching through the whole Province of Canterbury, *a Favour vouchſafed to none but himſelf during the continuance of that moſt Reverend* Prelate *in that* See; *who was pleas'd to have him begin his* Preaching *on* Whitſunday, June *the 3d. which he did with a Diſcourſe on that Text,* S. John 14.25,26 *the firſt of the following* Sermons.

In Sept. *following, the* Arch-biſhop *admitted him into the number of his* Chaplains, *at the ſame time (as his Cuſtom was) giving him a Living; his inſtitution to which being*

being deferr'd a while, till he ſhould be of full Age, in the mean time the Vicaridge *of* Minſter, *in the Iſle of* Thanet *fell void, to which he was Collated,* Nov. *the* 12th *of the ſame Year, and afterwards to the Rectory of* Chartham, Sept. *the* 19*th*, 1689. *He having firſt conferred on him the Holy Order of Prieſthood, with his own hand, on his Birth-day,* Nov. *the* 9*th*, 1688.

Now it was, that by the Advice and Encouragement of his Noble and Learned Patron, he addreſt himſelf to the Compoſing of his Great Work, *called by him* Anglia Sacra. *A Work of incredible pains, as muſt needs be acknowledged by any one who conſiders the uncommonneſs of the Subject, never before ſo treated of by any one, the ſcarcity and obſcurity of the materials from whence it was to be collected, and theſe too not to be had but in ſeveral places, and at vaſt diſtances; yet all theſe Difficulties were overcome by his own unwearied Diligence and Patience, and the kind and generous aſſiſtance of Friends. Among whom particularly muſt always be mentioned with Honor, the profoundly Learned Dr.* Lloyd, *the then Right Rev. Biſhop of St.* Aſaph, *and now of* Litchfield *and* Coventry, *who freely imparted to him many things worthy of Notice out of the curious Treaſury of his incom-*

parable Collections; *and did alſo ſeveral other ways animate him in the Proſecution of his Deſign.*

Nor ought here to be forgotten the Reverend and Learned Dr. John Batteley, Arch-Deacon *of* Canterbury, *his dear and worthy Friend; who, with thoſe two Learned Perſons, Dr.* William Hopkins, *and Dr.* Matthew Hutton, *the former Prebendary of* Worceſter, *and the Latter the Worthy Rector of* Ayno *in* Northamptonſhire, *communicated to him many things worthy of Publick Notice; the two firſt from the* Archives *of their reſpective Churches; and the laſt out of his own* private Collections.

A Work *this was of ſuch excellent Deſign, that for it alone, though he had given no other inſtance of his Induſtry and Zeal for the Cauſe of Religion and Learning, (as he had many) the Name of Mr.* Wharton *ought always to be dear to the Learned World; for the benefit and advantage whereof, ſo many* Ancient Monuments *of our Nation, relating to* Church Affairs, *have been brought to light and retriev'd from periſhing in that Obſcurity and Darkneſs, wherein they had lain hid for many Ages. Which (methinks) ſhould have inclined a Learned Gentleman, in the Preface to a late Book,*

Book, to reflect upon ſome of his Diſcourſes with a little more tenderneſs and reſpect.

The whole Work was deſign'd to exhibit to us a compleat Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory *of* England *until the Reformation. Two Volumes in Folio were by himſelf publiſhed in his Life-time: (*1691.*) A Third in Octavo is ſince his Death come out, giving an Account of the Biſhops and Deans of* London *and St.* Aſaph, *from the firſt Foundation of thoſe Sees, to the Year* 1540. *His account of which may perhaps by ſome be thought ſmall, and the performance not conſiderable; tho' to them who know how very little the helps in ſuch matters are, and the many tedious Hours it muſt coſt even to ſearch them out, it will, I doubt not, appear to deſerve another ſort of Judgment, and the conſideration thereof reflect a due Commendation upon his unwearied Endeavours.*

He intended the like for all the other Sees, if God had granted Life; but the infinite All-ſeeing Wiſdom hath other ways diſpoſed of him, and in the midſt of his great Deſigns, call'd him to himſelf, to receive an early reward for his well-deſerving Labours.

In 1693. *he put out* Venerable Bede's Commentaries on Geneſis, and on the Song of Habacuc, *together with* Aldhel-

parable Collections; *and did also several other ways animate him in the Prosecution of his Design.*

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A Work *this was of such excellent Design, that for it alone, though he had given no other instance of his Industry and Zeal for the Cause of Religion and Learning, (as he had many) the Name of Mr.* Wharton *ought always to be dear to the Learned World; for the benefit and advantage whereof, so many* Ancient Monuments *of our Nation, relating to* Church Affairs, *have been brought to light and retriev'd from perishing in that Obscurity and Darkness, wherein they had lain hid for many Ages. Which (methinks) should have inclined a Learned Gentleman, in the Preface to a late Book,*

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mus *his Eloquent Book* of the Praiſe of Virginity.

There are ſeveral other Pieces *for which the World is in ſome meaſure, and upon ſome account indebted to him. As* the Life of Cardinal Pool. The Diſceptation between the Embaſſadors of *England* and *France*, in the Council of *Conſtance* about Precedency. Mr. *Stripe*'s Life of Archbiſhop *Cranmer, which he reviewed, adding ſome critical Obſervations thereon in a large Poſtſcript. With ſome* others *alſo.*

But that which he himſelf more eſpecially rejoyced in, and which, to uſe his own words, he accounted the moſt fortunate Tranſaction of his whole Life; *was the Honour which his late Lord, the moſt Rev. Archbiſhop* Sancroft *did him upon his Death-bed, in committing to his Truſt the Papers of that Bleſſed Martyr Archbiſhop* Laud, *and to his Care the Edition of them. The moſt conſiderable among which (containing the* Troubles *and* Tryal *of that great Perſon)* he publiſhed in the Year 1694.

Theſe were the Works *of Mr.* Wharton, *which the Author of this Account has thought ſufficient almoſt barely to Name, without pretending to paſs any Judgment concerning the Performance; for that indeed is render'd altogether needleſs by the Univerſal*

verſal Approbation and Applauſe wherewith they were conſtantly received, as well in Foreign Countries as in our own; by the Engagements which they always drew upon him from the greateſt and moſt Learned, of entring upon ſomething elſe as ſoon as any one was finiſhed; and Laſtly, by the Eſteem and Value they procured to him from Perſons of all Degrees and Qualities.

Beſides thoſe which he publiſhed in his Life-time, he has left ſeveral Pieces *behind him, both Manuſcript and others, about which he has beſtowed great Pains. Among the former are ſeveral* Engliſh *Hiſtorians never as yet publiſhed; which he hath with exact Care and Faithfulneſs tranſcribed and collated with the Originals, fitting them for the Preſs, and which poſſibly ſome time or other may be made publick,* viz.

Benedictus Abbas de Geſtis Henrici Secundi Regis Angliæ, *A.D.* 1170.

Chronicon Nicolai Tribetti (vulgo de Trebeth) Dominicani, *ab An.* 1136. *ad An.* 1307.

Chronicon Petri Ickham, Compilatio de Geſtis Britonum & Anglorum.

Stephani Birchington Monachi Cantuarienſis Hiſtoria de Regibus Angliæ poſt Conqueſtum.

Liber Nonus de Miraculis Anglorum.

In some of them are contained vast Collections out of Ancient and Modern Records relating to Church Affairs.

As to his Sermons which are here presented to the Reader, there is one thing which he is desired to take notice of. There was a Sermon, which ought to have accompanied these; to wit, that Preacht before her late Majesty of Blessed Memory; *but being by some accident left imperfect, it has not been thought fit to be Printed among the rest, which 'tis hoped will be entertain'd with no less Applause now appearing together in publick, than the Satisfaction they were heard with when deliver'd apart in private Auditories. So much however happily remains of that aforesaid imperfect Sermon, as is sufficient to declare what worthy thoughts he had of the present Government, and thereby clear his Memory from the unjust Aspersions of some, who have been pleas'd to represent him as one who had not a sincere affection for it. In one place he has these words;* If to defend the Fatherless, Orphans and Widows be so acceptable to God; how noble an Act must it be accounted, to vindicate a whole Nation from Injustice and Oppression, to defend and maintain the Cause of the Church of God; *In another place these;* It is undeniable that the Profession

feſſion of the true Religion is maintain'd in this Nation under the happy Government of *Their Majeſties*, as well as it was of old among the Jews in the Reign of *Hezekiah*. *In another place he ſpeaks thus, which are moſt remarkable.* But that other part of the Promiſe, for my Servant *David*'s ſake, never had any People greater reaſon to apply to themſelves, than we of this Nation, at this time, have. God hath Bleſſed us with *Princes* of eminent Virtue and Piety; who, not content to employ their Authority in the ſupport and defence of Religion, endeavour to retrieve the Power of it in the Lives of their Subjects by the Luſtre of their own Example; who have delivered *this National Church* from the Oppreſſion of her profeſſed Enemies, and the apparent Danger of ſudden Ruin, and have thereby become to us what *Conſtantine* was to the whole *Catholick Church*, in the early Ages of Chriſtianity, and what *Queen Elizabeth* of Bleſſed Memory was to *this particular Church* in the laſt Age. God hath Bleſſed us with a *King*, who to complete the Deliverance which he wrought for us, and to ſettle us in Peace and Tranquility, hath ſpared no Pains, and continually hazarded his

own Royal Perſon; and is at this day acting with unwearied Vigour and Courage againſt the *Common Enemy* of our Nation, and the *Oppreſſor of the Chriſtian World*, for the Vindication of Juſtice, the relief of afflicted Innocence, the Security of this *Church* and *Nation*.

But among his Manuſcripts, there is one eſpecially, which ought by no means to be paſt by in ſilence, as giving ſuch an inſtance of his wonderful diligence, as cannot eaſily be parallel'd; which is his Account of the Manuſcripts *in* Lambeth Library; *Wherein, beſides giving a moſt exact Catalogue of them, he has under every Book tranſcrib'd all thoſe* Treatiſes *contain'd in them which are not yet publiſhed: And what are, he has compar'd with that exactneſs, as to take notice of the words that are otherwiſe ſpell'd in the* Original *than in the* Print. *That Catalogue purchaſed by the preſent Archbiſhop, together with many other of his Manuſcripts may, when occaſion ſhall ſerve, ſee the Light.*

Among the Printed Books, towards a new and more correct Edition of which, whenever it ſhall be thought convenient, he hath conſiderably contributed, are theſe following, Hiſtoria Mat. Parker Archiepiſcopi Cantuar. De Antiquitate Britannicæ Eccleſiæ, *&c.*

enlarg'd

enlarg'd with Notes, Collections *and* Additions, *partly made by the moſt Reverend Author himſelf, and partly by others, and ſeveral by Mr.* Wharton *himſelf*; *together with the Life of the ſaid Archbiſhop, as alſo that of St.* Auſtin of Cant. *written by* George Acworth.

Franciſcus Godwinus de Præſulibus Angliæ, *with ſome* Notes.

Florentius Wigornienſis, *and* Matthæus Weſtmonaſterienſis, *both enlarged with many* Notes, Corrections, *and* Additions.

He had likewiſe made Notes *on ſeveral of his own Books already publiſhed by him, which 'tis like were deſign'd for* Additions *to thoſe Books, whenever they ſhould receive a New* Impreſſion.

For theſe his Performances for the Cauſe of Religion and Learning, as he was admirably fitted by the Excellency of his Natural Endowments, a quick Apprehenſion, ſolid Judgment, *and* moſt Faithful Memory; *ſo were theſe rais'd to a great Perfection by his* Induſtry. *An* Induſtry *never ſufficiently to be commended, though in this (alas!) to be lamented, that it too much haſtned his Death and our Loſs.*

Nor were his Moral Accompliſhments *inferior to his* Natural *and* acquired Perfections.

fections. *He was* Modeſt, ſober, *and* Pious; *in all things ſhewing himſelf to be acted by a* truly *Chriſtian and Religious Spirit. Of which thoſe two inſtances, to name no more, may not unfitly be given. The one, That he never undertook any Matter of moment, without firſt imploring the Divine Aſſiſtance and Bleſſing thereupon. The other, That in all thoſe Journeys which his Learned Deſigns engag'd him in, he was ever wont ſo to order his Affairs, as not once to omit being preſent at the monthly Sacrament wherever he came. And then, of his Zeal for Religion, and the honour of God, thoſe excellent Diſcourſes which he has publiſhed in defence of the beſt and pureſt part of the Chriſtian Church now extant upon the face of the Earth, in oppoſition to the Corruptions of Popery (thoſe Scandals to Chriſtian Religion, ſo highly diſhonourable to God, and ſo injurious to the Bleſſed Author of it, and an offence to all that truly love and fear him) will always be a conſtant and ſtanding Evidence.*

It has not been thought convenient to add any inſtances of his Charity, though many might be given; becauſe agreeable to his own Deſire, which always was to be as private therein, as poſſibly he could. This one only may (its preſum'd) not improperly be mention'd;

mention'd; viz. *That by his Will, whereof he appointed his Father the Rev. Mr.* Edm. Wharton, *the Rev. and Learned Dr.* Thorp, *one of the worthy Prebendaries of* Canterbury, *and his dear Friend Mr.* Charles Battely *the Executors, he has order'd the greatest part of that ſmall Eſtate which he left, to be diſpos'd of to a religious uſe in the Pariſh of* Worſtead *in* Norfolk, *where he was born.*

As to his Perſon, *he was of a middle Stature, of a brown Complexion, and of a grave and comely Countenance. His Conſtitution was vigorous and healthful. In Confidence of the Strength of which, he was too little regardful of himſelf, and too intent upon his Studies. Inſomuch, that he did often deny himſelf the Refreſhments of Nature, becauſe of them. And ſometimes in the coldeſt weather would ſit ſo long at them, and without a Fire, as to have his hands and feet ſo Chill'd, as not to be able to feel the uſe of them in a conſiderable time. His too eager Proſecution of theſe; together with a weakneſs contracted in his Stomach, by the too violent Operation of an unhappy Medicine which he had taken, ſo far broke the Excellency of his Conſtitution, that no Art nor Skill of the moſt experienced Phyſicians could repair it. The Summer before he died he went to the* Bath, *in hopes to have retriev'd*

triev'd his decaying Nature by the help of thoſe excellent Medicinal Waters. *Some benefit he found by them; but at his return from thence to* Canterbury, *falling again to his Studies immoderately, and beyond what his ſtrength could bear, he quite undid all that they had done. So that after a long and lingring decay of Nature, he was brought at length to the utmoſt extremity of weakneſs; under which languiſhing for ſome time, at laſt in the Thirty firſt Year of his* Age, *on the* 5th *of* March, *(that ſad day, whereon that never ſufficiently to be lamented Princeſs, our moſt incomparable* Queen *was interr'd) about Three a Clock in the morning, he with an humble patience ſubmitted to the ſtroke of Death, cheerfully reſigning his departing Soul into the moſt Holy hands of his gracious Redeemer.*

* *See* Acta Erudit Lipſ. *Anno* 1696. *Pag.* 425. Idem omnium, quæ ſunt in Angliâ, Eccleſiarum Cathedralium Hiſtoriam molirebatur; verum, quod non modò Anglis, ad quorum antiquitates eruendas natus & factus videbatur, ſed omnibus bonas literas amantibus dolendum eſt, immatura morte præventus, quam trigeſſimo ætatis anno ſubiit, ſpecimen tantum magni illius, quod animo conceperat, operis reliquit.

*The loſs of ſo extraordinary a Perſon in the Flower of his Age, and one from whom the learned World had juſtly conceiv'd ſuch great Expectations of moſt admirable Performances from his indefatigable Labours for the advantage of it, was very much lamented by learned Men, both at home and abroad.**

The

The Clergy, *in particular, as a Teſtimony of that value which they had for him, did in great Numbers attend at his Funeral. Here ought by no means to be paſt by in ſilence that ſingular Honour which was paid to him by the Right Rev. the Biſhops: Many of which, and among the reſt, the moſt Reverend Archbiſhop himſelf, and the Right Rev. Biſh. of* Litchfield, *who had both of them viſited him in his laſt ſickneſs, being preſent at it; while another of that venerable Order, the Right Rev. the Biſh. of* Rocheſter *perform'd the Funeral Office.*

All ſorts of Perſons were willing to ſhew their reſpect for him in the beſt manner they were able. The Rev. the Dean and Prebendaries of Weſtminſter, *not only cauſed the King's Scholars to attend him to his Grave (an uncommon reſpect, and the higheſt they can ſhew on ſuch an occaſion) but did alſo each for himſelf remit their Cuſtomary Dues for Interment in their Church, as the laſt and moſt proper Teſtimony they could then give of the high eſteem in which they held Mr.* Wharton *and his learned Labours: The* Quire *likewiſe committing his Body to Reſt with Solemn and Devout* Anthems *compos'd by that moſt ingenious Artiſt Mr.* Henry Purcel.

He lies Buried in the South ſide of the Cathedral

Cathedral Church of Weſtminſter, *towards the Weſt end. Near whereunto in the Wall is erected a ſmall but decent Monument of White Marble; whereon is the following Inſcription.*

H. S. C.

HENRICUS WHARTON, A. M.

ECCLESIÆ ANGLICANÆ PRESBYTER,
RECTOR ECCLESIÆ DE *CHARTHAM*,
NECNON VICARIUS ECCLESIÆ DE *MINSTER*
IN INSULA *THANATO*, IN *DIÆCESI CANTUARIENSI*;
REVERENDISSIMO AC SANCTISSIMO PRÆSULI

WILHELMO

ARCHIEPISCOPO CANTUARIENSI
A SACRIS DOMESTICIS.

QUI MULTA AD AUGENDAM ET ILLUSTRANDAM
REM LITERARIAM,
MULTA PRO ECCLESIA CHRISTI
CONSCRIPSIT,

PLURA MOLIEBATUR.

Obiit 3° Non. *Mart.* A. D. MDCXCIV.

Ætatis ſuæ XXXI.

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The

The First SERMON ON WHITSUNDAY.

Preach'd at *Lambeth* Chapel.

John XIV. 25, 26.

These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

THese Words (being part of the Gospel for this Day) do not only contain the Promise of that infinite and wonderful Benefit, the Completion of which we this Day

Vol. 1. commemorate; But also declare the nature and intention of it; and thereby most fitly not only excite us to a grateful Remembrance of the Divine Beneficence, but also teach us to form true Apprehensions and a just Veneration of so great a Mystery. A Mystery which was promised by Christ to his Apostles, as the greatest of all Benefits, Which might alone supply the otherwise irreparable loss of his Presence, and intirely dispel their Grief arising from the melancholy Apprehensions of his approaching departure. A Mystery which was reserved for the ultimate consummation of the Christian Religion and Divine dispensation of the Gospel; Which being designed by the Father, and Founded by the Son, was at last brought to Perfection by the Mission and Descent of the Holy Ghost.

No Wonder therefore if the Promise of so great a Benefit was so mightily insisted on by Christ, as a sufficient Remedy to his Disciples for all Afflictions, and the last and greatest Legacy which he could bequeath unto them; If the Performance of it was so earnestly expected by the Apostles; and the Remembrance of it with an uninterrupted

rupted Solemnity Celebrated by the Church in all Ages, more eſpecially by the Ancient Church; in which all Chriſtians uſed to ſtand continually in time of Divine Service from *Eaſter* to *Whitſunday*, thereby teſtifying the impatient Expectation wherewith they attended the Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt as upon this Day. Vol. I.

The Declaration of this Promiſe made in the words of my Text, was occaſioned by the great Anxiety which the Apoſtles expreſſed at the News of our Saviour's Departure; and their wonderful Ignorance of the true Nature and Deſign of the Chriſtian Religion, after ſo long and ſo excellent Inſtruction from their Divine Maſter.

The former is related in the end of the preceding Chapter, which therefore Chriſt endeavours to remove by a vehement Exhortation to a ſteddy Faith in the beginning of this. *Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God; believe alſo in me.* Aſſuring them that his Departure was for no other end than to prepare a Place for their Reception into thoſe Manſions, of which they had been by him ſufficiently inform'd. At this, *Thomas*, far from acknowledging any

Vol. 1. ſuch Information, complains in the *5th Verſe* that they were ignorant, both of the Place and the Way to it.

Our Saviour anſwers, that the Place was no other than the Society of his Father, whom they had ſufficiently known by converſing with *Him*.

This far from removing the Miſtakes of the Apoſtles, gave occaſion to the Diſcovery of a far greater Ignorance in them.

For in the *8th Verſe*, *Philip* deſired him to ſhew the Father to them, thereby manifeſting how widely he had hitherto miſtaken the Doctrine of Chriſt, and what groſs Notions of the Father he entertain'd.

So ſtrange an Ignorance drew a ſharp expoſtulation from our Saviour. *Have I been ſo long time with you, and yet haſt thou not known me Philip?* Ver. 9.

Thereupon declaring unto him what ſufficient Means he had already given them of knowing the Father; and promiſing to enable them yet further to a more perfect Knowledge of him, by ſending the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth. He aſſureth them of a more clear and expreſs Revelation of this Matter at his Reſurrection, by manifeſting

sting himself, and consequently the Father, to piously disposed Persons, who loved him and kept his Commandments. Although he intended not to manifest himself in the same Degree and Manner to the whole World. Vol. 1.

At this *Judas Lebbeus* seems to be astonished, and in a passionate Exclamation, which includeth somewhat of Despair in it, saith unto him, *Ver.* 22. *Lord how is it that thou wilt manifest thy self unto us, and not unto the World!* as imagining this illustrious Manifestation to be no other, than taking Possession, in a solemn and magnificent manner, of that Glorious Worldly Kingdom, which himself with the other Apostles in vain expected to be founded by their Master.

Such strange Mistakes, of which the meanest Christians would be ashamed in the present Constitution of the Church, might justly be admired to have proceeded from those, who were the familiar Attendants of Christ through a Triennial Preaching, Acquainted with all his Discourses, and honoured with a familiar Conversation, if we enquir'd not more narrow-

Vol. I. ly into the Causes of Things and Reasons of the Divine Dispensation.

Our Saviour himself seems not in the least to be surprized at it. But only after a short Answer to *Lebbæus* his Question, hence taketh occasion to renew the Promise of that Remedy, which he had ever design'd, and often before promis'd, I mean the Mission of the Holy Ghost, in these Words: *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* As if he should say:

These Answers I have briefly given to your Doubts and Scruples, such as the shortness and necessity of the Time would permit, which still remains to me to be spent in your Company.

I had before sufficiently explained all these Mysteries to you, Provided your Minds, by removal of all Prejudices by ordinary Endowments of right Apprehension, and using due Diligence, had been rightly disposed to receive them.

But

But ſince you ſtill continue ignorant of thoſe great Truths, and infinitely miſtake my Doctrine; And not only ſo, but ſuffer your ſelves to be poſſeſs'd with Terror and Amazement at the News of my Departure, I will not forſake you, or leave you deſtitute of the Means, either of Conſolation or better Inſtruction; but abundantly provide for both, by ſending to you after my Aſcenſion another Comforter, even the Holy Ghoſt; whom the Father, at my Interceſſion, and for my ſake will ſend unto you. Vol. 1.

He ſhall erect your drooping *Spirits*, and remove your Grief by adminiſtring Conſolation to you: And diſpel your Ignorance, by enlightning your Minds with clear Notions, and true Interpretations of whatſoever I have Taught unto you; and recalling into your Mind all thoſe Doctrines and Leſſons of mine, which you may have forgotten.

Theſe Words being thus explained repreſent to us,

I. The Promiſe of ſending a Comforter.

II. The Perſon to be ſent, the Holy Ghoſt.

Vol. 1. III. The Office to be performed by the Holy Ghoſt when ſent. Which however various, is perfectly included, Either in the diverſe Significations of the Word Παράκλητος, or Comforter, (which may be taken as an Advocate, a Monitor, or a Conſolator.) Or in the annexed Action of Teaching them all things, and bringing all things into their Remembrance, whatſoever Chriſt had ſaid unto them.

At preſent I ſhall conſider no more than the latter Branch of the Third Point; that is, the Office of Teaching the Apoſtles, which was to be performed by the Holy Ghoſt,

And in handling this

I ſhall in the Firſt Place inquire what were the Cauſes and Reaſons of this prodigious Ignorance of the Apoſtles, after ſo long and ſo excellent Inſtruction.

Secondly, I ſhall prove that the Permiſſion of this Ignorance till the ſending of the Holy Ghoſt, was not in the leaſt repugnant to the Divine Wiſdom, or the Deſign of the Goſpel.

Thirdly, I ſhall draw ſome few Concluſions from both.

Firſt

Firſt then, the Cauſes and Reaſons of this ſo long continued Ignorance of the Apoſtles. Vol. 1.

Of theſe I take the chief and moſt fundamental One to have been their Ignorance of the true Senſe of Scripture.

For the better explaining of this Cauſe, I will premiſe ſome few Obſervations.

As 1. The Conformity of the Life and Actions of Chriſt, to the Propheſies of the Old Teſtament, was to the Jews the beſt and principal Argument of the Divinity of Chriſt, of his Divine Miſſion, and the Truth of his Revelations.

Miracles indeed might create a great Probability of the Truth of theſe Articles. But ſuch a Conformity alone could demonſtrate it, ſince Miracles were common to inferiour Prophets, and ſometimes even to falſe Prophets. But an entire Agreement of the precedent Propheſies was appropriated to the ſole Perſon of the true Meſſias.

This appears from the Nature of the Old Teſtament, and End of writing it, which taken in all its parts, is chiefly de-

Vol. 1. deſigned to point out the future Meſſias, by certain plain Notes and Indications, whereby he might eaſily be diſcover'd to the Jews.

The Hiſtorical Books are imployed in deſcribing his Genealogy. The Pſalms and Prophets in foretelling the Time of his coming, the Manner of his Life, his Paſſion, Reſurrection and Doctrine.

Now it would be highly injurious to the Wiſdom of God, that he ſhould profeſſedly cauſe ſo many Books to be written, chiefly to deſign the Meſſias; And yet deſign him by ſuch Characters, as ſhould not be proper to him alone, but might be common to other Perſons. So that the Agreement of thoſe Propheſies to the Perſon of Jeſus Chriſt, was to the Jews a moſt demonſtrative Proof that he was the true Meſſias.

Miracles indeed were in their reſpect alſo neceſſary to him. But that chiefly, becauſe it was before Propheſied of the Meſſias, that great and wonderful Miracles ſhould be wrought by him. And ſome ſuch extraordinary Actions were required to excite the Jews to a ſerious Conſideration of the Quality and Chara-

Character of the Perſon who wrought them. Vol. I.

If the Actions of Chriſt had been deficient in any one Point of Conformity to the precedent Propheſies, it had been irrational as well as unlawful for the Jews to have admitted his Revelations, although confirmed by the greateſt Miracles imaginable; Since they muſt have owned thereby the Falſity of thoſe Propheſies, of the Truth of which they were abundantly convinced, as being confirm'd to them by an equal Authority of Miracles.

But not only doth the Reaſon and Nature of Things demonſtrate this Truth; The Practice and Example of Chriſt and his Apoſtles evidently manifeſt it.

The firſt, while yet on Earth, conſtantly aſſerted his Divine Miſſion and Quality of Meſſias from the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, which had Teſtified of him. And his Diſciples after his Death carried on the ſame Argument.

He perform'd indeed greater Miracles than any ever had done before him. But in Diſputing with the Jews

Vol. I. Jews he commonly waved that Argument, and appealed to the Scripture; As well knowing, *That if they would not hear* Moſes *and the Prophets, neither would they be perſwaded, though one roſe from the Dead.* By which Words he plainly inſinuates, that the greateſt of his Miracles, his Reſurrection, was a leſs valid Proof, and inferiour to the Teſtimony of *Moſes* and the Prophets.

This he often thought alone ſufficient to propoſe, as a neceſſary Motive of Belief to the Jews, and ſuch a Motive as could not be rejected, without diſowning and deſtroying the Authority of the Old Teſtament.

For thus he diſputes in the Vth. of St. *John*, Verſes 39, 46, 47. *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal Life, and they are they which Teſtifie of me. For had ye believed* Moſes, *ye would have believed me: For he wrote of me. But if ye believed not his Writings, how ſhall ye believe my Words?*

No other Method did he make uſe of to convince his Diſciples walking to *Emmaus*, that all thoſe Calamities which had befallen his Perſon, ought neceſſarily to be inflicted on the Meſſias.

All

All thoſe Glorious Miracles, of which themſelves had been Witneſſes, proved unſucceſsful; and could not ſecure their Faith from a ſhameful Fluctuation. Until Chriſt, *beginning at* Moſes *and all the Prophets, expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himſelf, and opened their Underſtanding, that they might underſtand the Scripture, that it was thus written, and that it thus behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the Dead the Third Day.* Vol. I.

If the conſtant Companions of our Saviour's Life could be drawn to the true Knowledge of him, by no other Argument, than a full and plain Interpretation of the Propheſies of the Old Teſtament; In vain do we hope that any other Arguments could convince the remaining Jews, who were leſs acquainted with the Holineſs of his Life, and Greatneſs of his Miracles.

In the next place, we may obſerve that the Apoſtles were choſen by Chriſt, and uſed as the inſeparable Companions of his Life. Not ſo much to be inſtructed in the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Faith, or trained up in

Vol. 1. in the neceſſary Qualifications of Preachers, who who might propagate the Goſpel after the Departure of their Maſter; As to be Witneſſes and Spectators of his Actions and Converſation; which they might afterwards teſtifie to the World, and thereby convince Mankind, that they were entirely conformable to the Ancient Predictions of the Prophets.

That the former could not be the End or Intention of their Accompanying Chriſt through the whole Diſcharge of his Prophetick Office, appears plainly from their Ignorance, both of the Myſteries of Religion, and their own Duty at the Time of our Saviour's Crucifixion.

Yet can we not ſuppoſe, but that Chriſt obtain'd his chief Aim, which he propoſed to himſelf, in ſelecting certain Perſons for the Companions of his Life.

This end therefore could indeed be no other, than that which I have already aſſigned, of witneſſing and publiſhing to the World the Actions of Chriſt, whoſe Reaſonableneſs and Agreement to the Predictions of the Moſaick Law, was to be judged and deter-

determined by every private Man.

For we no where find, that the Apoſtles, from the Authority of their Miracles, which were not inferiour to thoſe of Chriſt himſelf, pretended to ſet up themſelves for infallible Judges, or exerciſe an arbitrary command over the Judgments of other Men.

They might indeed much more juſtly have claimed ſuch a Priviledge, than any ever ſince their times; As being perſonally infallible, and endued with the Power of working Miracles. Yet they never endeavoured to command the aſſent of their Hearers, before they had informed and ſatisfied their Underſtandings. But proceeded in a more rational Method; and following the Example of their Maſter, choſe rather to convince their Judgment with Arguments, whoſe Attention they had before excited by Miracles.

Theſe Arguments, when directed to the Jews, were chiefly taken from the Old Teſtament: Whoſe Prophecies they demonſtrated to have plainly foretold and deſcribed the Actions and Sufferings of Chriſt, of which Actions themſelves were Witneſſes.

Thus

Vol. I. Thus we find St. *Peter* in his Sermon made to the Jews upon this Day to have uſed no other Method. And not ſo much to have urged the Illuſtrious Miracle of the Gift of Tongues newly conferred on them, as the Conformity of that, and all other Actions of Chriſt to the Ancient Predictions of the Prophets.

His Sermon in the following Chapter, proceeds from the ſame Foundation. And St. *Stephen* in the VII. *Chap.* St. *Paul* in the XIII. uſe no other Argument, when Diſputing againſt the Jews.

From a clear Interpretation of the Propheſies in Scripture, concerning the Meſſias, *Philip* convinced the Eunuch, who was a Jewiſh Proſelite, of the Divinity of Chriſt, *Acts* VIII. and *Acts* XVIII. *Apollos* is ſaid to have *mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, ſhewing by the Scriptures, that Jeſus was Chriſt.*

St. *Paul* pleading before King *Agrippa*, endeavoured before all things, to prove that he ſtood there to be judged for the Hope of the Promiſe made by God unto the Fathers, *Acts* XXVI. 6. And *Ver.* 27. appealed to the

the Prophets, and asked *Agrippa*, whether he believed not them, insinuating that if he truly believed the Prophets, and understood their genuine Sense, he could not but embrace the Christian Religion. Vol. I.

Lastly, to say no more, his Disputes with the Jews at *Rome* were employed in expounding and Testifying the Kingdom of God: *Perswading them concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of* Moses, *and out of the Prophets, from Morning till Evening*, Acts XXVIII. 23.

It appears then, That the chief reason of the choice of the Apostles to a familiar conversation with our Saviour, before his Ascension, was no other than that they might thereby be enabled to Testify and publish to the World his Actions, Miracles and Sufferings; which being received from them, might then by every private Man be examined and compared with the Antient predictions of the Prophets, concerning the Messias.

And if so, then it was not necessary that Christ should carefully instruct his Disciples before his Ascension, in the true sense of Scripture, and the antient Prophecies concerning him, or

Vol. I. elaborately explain to them the Myſteries of his Incarnation, Paſſion and Aſcenſion. Since this conduced not directly to the end before mentioned, and might more conveniently be effected, when it ſhould become neceſſary after his Aſcenſion, by the Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt. And accordingly we find not our Saviour in all his private Diſcourſes and Inſtructions to his Apoſtles, profeſſedly explaining the Scriptures to them, before his Reſurrection.

He frequently admoniſhed them of the dangers and afflictions they ſhould undergo, in executing their Miſſion; of the Courage, Patience and other Vertues, wherewith they ought to be endued, and the perpetual aſſiſtance which they might expect from him; but ſeldom inculcated the conſideration of thoſe Propheſies, which might bring them to a right apprehenſion of the nature and deſign of his coming into the World. Or if at any time he mentioned and explained ſuch Propheſies to them, it was only by way of propoſal, without any ſuch extraordinary illumination of mind, and infuſed capacity of underſtanding them, as

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was afterwards bestowed on them, by the Mission of the Holy Ghost. He never denyed to them indeed that ordinary Grace and Assistance, which he is wont to give to all well disposed Persons, who rightly ask it; but the efficacy of that ordinary assistance, was overthrown and stifled by the more potent resistance of inveterate prejudices, and false preconceived Opinions concerning the Messias. Vol. I.

But if the Apostles received no extraordinary Instructions of the Holy Scripture from their Master, before his Resurrection, we cannot hope that they should obtain any competent knowledge of it, by their natural Strength, or acquired Learning. Many reasons had induced our Saviour to choose to him Disciples, rather out of the meanest of the People, than from the Learned Doctors and Expositors of the Law. And at that time, in the Jewish Church, by an intollerable corruption of Discipline, the common People were by their Doctors and Teachers Studiously deprived of the means of an exact and accurate knowledge of Scripture.

They were deterred from a diligent

Vol. I. search of Scripture, by many artifices and pretences: by amplifying the difficulty of their undertaking, the obscurity of those Oracles, and rashness of inquiring into those sacred Mysteries with unwashen Hands, that is, as themselves explained it, without a tedious preparation of Learning and Education.

By these arguments the Scribes and Pharisees had engrossed the Study of Scripture to themselves; and taking away the Key of Knowledge, had suffered none to enter into a disquisition and examination of those sacred Prophesies. Upon account of this Ignorance in the common people, the Scribes and Pharisees, in the VI. St. *John. ver.* 39 pretended that they were no competent Judges of the true Messias, who could be known no otherwise than from Scripture. *But this people, who knoweth not the Law are cursed.* We cannot imagine the Apostles to have been exempt from this common calamity, but rather more deeply engaged in it than others; if we consider the meanness of their condition, the nature of their employments, their gross and perpetual mistakes of our Saviour

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Doctrine, and till the reception of the Holy Ghoſt, their inſuperable ſlowneſs of underſtanding. Vol. 1.

If then, a right knowledge of Scripture was abſolutely neceſſary to a perfect underſtanding of the Nature and Office of the Meſſias; if the Apoſtles were naturally devoid of this knowledge, and not extraordinarily endued with it by Chriſt, before the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt, all which we have already proved; it muſt needs follow, that the Apoſtles, before the reception of that extraordinary knowledge, were ignorant of the Myſteries and Deſigns of their Maſters Miſſion. And accordingly if we look into the Hiſtory of the Goſpel, we ſhall find their ignorance of Scripture to be aſſigned as the chief cauſe of their miſtakes in all other points. So that what our Saviour ſaid to the Jews, *Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures*, was perfectly true of them. Thus *John* XI. 22. Our Saviour promiſing to raiſe up the Temple of his Body in three Days, if it ſhould be diſſolved, his Apoſtles underſtood not the true meaning of his words, but when he was riſen from the Dead, then they

Vol. 1. at last *remembred, that he had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.* They before, even from their Infancy, believed the Scripture in general, that it was the Word of God, and divinely inspir'd; but now they understood and believed the true sense of Scripture, the Ignorance of which had before caused them to fall into Errour. Again S. *John* XII. 16. *These things understood not his Disciples at the first, but when Jesus was glorified,* (that is after his Ascension) *Then remembred they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.*

Here the promise made in the Text is fully accomplished by a twofold Operation of the Holy Ghost, the one recalling into the remembrance of the Apostles, the Actions and Sufferings of Christ, of which they had been witnesses in his Life time, the other clearly proposing to them the intire conformity between those Actions and the precedent Prophesies which were written of him. In like manner our Saviour reproving the Disciples of *Emmaus* for their amazement and despair of their Masters Resurrection,

surrection, upbraids to them their Ignorance of Scripture: *O fools, and slow of heart, to believe all that the Prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? Luc.* XXIV. 25, 26. They doubted not of the Truth of those Prophesies, but affixing false interpretations to them, had perverted their sense, and thereby in believing them, assented not to the true Prophesies, but to the fictions of their own Brains, and thereby were hindred from understanding the necessity of Christs Suffering these things, and entring into his glory. Vol. 1.

I have now dispatched the first and chief reason of the Apostles Ignorance. I proceed to assign some other causes of it; and among these, the false notions and prejudices which they had received by their Education, deserve more especially to be considered.

The Jews had ever, even from the time of *Moses*, lived in expectation of a glorious Messias, who should be the Author of the most Illustrious benefits to their Nation, rescue them from their afflictions, and settle them in an

Vol. 1. external State of Happineſs. This was typified by all their Rites and Ceremonies, foretold by their Prophets, and Celebrated in their publick Offices; in the firm expectation of this, their forefathers died, and themſelves, continued their hopes under their greateſt afflictions. But then by falſe Interpretations of the Ancient Propheſies, the Doctors of the Jewiſh Law, had long before the coming of our Saviour, entertain'd and propagated mean and unworthy thoughts of the Meſſias. They had formed to themſelves mighty expectations of an external pomp and ſecular greatneſs, wherewith their Meſſias ſhould enter upon his Office, and which he ſhould communicate to the whole Nation. They thought not of ſpiritual Bleſſings, reformation of Manners, removal of Errors, propoſal of a pure and rational Religion, and aſſurance of a ſpiritual Happineſs in another Life; but mighty Armies, and continual Triumphs, wide Conqueſts and ineſtimable Spoils. They expected to be freed from the Roman Yoke, by the Victorious Arms of the Meſſias, and by an uninterrupted ſucceſs, at laſt be inabled to give Laws to the whole World.

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These fond conceits were now entertained by the whole Jewish Nation, and tenaciously maintained by the Apostles, who all along believed indeed their Master to be the true and great Messias, but withal, even to his Ascension, continued to believe that he had not yet entred upon the execution of this glorious Office. Not all the premonitions of his future Sufferings, not the experience of his present Poverty and Disgrace, or the sight of his Crucifixion and Burial, could remove this inveterate Error from their minds, or create in them a right apprehension of our *Saviours* Doctrine and Office: But after all, when he was ready to Ascend up into Heaven, they asked him by common consent; *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to* Israel? Wilt thou now commence that glorious Reign, which we have so long expected?

The want of this external Pomp, and appearance in a State of such extraordinary humility, totally hindred his Brethren, that is, his Kindred from believing on him, as is expressed St. *John* VII. 5. and could not divert

Vol. 1. divert the Apoſtles, who believed him to be the Meſſias, from nouriſhing vain hopes of a future greatneſs in this World. Inſomuch as immediately after Chriſt had foretold them, in the X. of St. *Mark*, that he ſhould be betrayed, delivered to the Gentiles, Buffeted, Scourged and Crucified; the two Sons of *Zebedee*, not diſcouraged by all theſe calamities, which they imagined to be the entrance into a greater Temporal glory, requeſted of him, That *One might ſit on his right hand, the other on his left, in his Kingdom.* And the Diſciples of *Emmaus* far from conſidering the paſt ſufferings of Chriſt, and reflecting on the circumſtances of his Paſſion, and precedent admonitions of it, which might juſtly have refuted and defeated their fooliſh expectations, began to ſuſpect this was not the true Meſſias, ſince he had not brought the hoped for external redemption to the Jews. *We truſted that it had been He, which ſhould have redeemed* Iſrael; but thoſe hopes are vaniſhed; and he yet continues in his Grave.

Since then the Apoſtles continued to retain theſe prejudices and preconceived Errors

Errors, and were thereby hindred from conceiving the ſpirituality of Chriſt's Kingdom, which is the firſt and greateſt Principle of the Chriſtian Religion; it was impoſſible they ſhould rightly underſtand the Doctrine of Chriſt, until theſe prejudices were removed, and true Notions of the nature of his Kingdom introduced. Till then, they could not but groſly miſtake the meaning of all thoſe many Revelations, which he imparted to them, and conſtantly wreſted them to their own falſe notions and apprehenſions. This not only diſabled them from underſtanding the true ſenſe of what Chriſt was pleaſed to reveal to them, but alſo hindred them, while continuing in that State, from receiving any more clear and expreſs Revelation. This our Saviour plainly tells them, *John* XVI. 12, 13. *I have yet many things to ſay unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all Truth.* I have yet greater Myſteries to reveal to you, and which will ſeem more aſtoniſhing to you; but the indiſpoſition of your underſtanding, at preſent clouded with Prejudices and Errours, would defeat Vol. I.

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Vol. 1. feat the benefit of them. Theſe therefore I leave to be revealed by the Holy Ghoſt, whom I ſhall ſend unto you, who by an extraordinary operation aſſiſting your underſtanding, will prepare it for a ready reception of all thoſe Truths.

A Third reaſon of this Ignorance of the Apoſtles, at that time, when our Saviour ſpoke theſe words of my Text to them, may be, that the greateſt and moſt Illuſtrious Actions of our Saviours Life, the Myſteries of which created in them the greateſt perplexity, remained yet to be performed. I mean his Crucifixion, Reſurrection and Aſcenſion. Before they ſaw theſe things effected, they could not imagine, that he, whom they had repreſented to themſelves as a Triumphant Meſſias, and Earthly King, ſhould undergo them; and therefore all our Saviours premonitions concerning them, were no leſs dark and obſcure, than ſurprizing to them; but afterwards the real performance of them awakened their attention, and gave them occaſion to reflect more ſeriouſly upon the reaſons of theſe things.

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They then plainly perceived the true meaning of every prediction of Christ, when they saw the event of the thing foretold; and viewing the circumstances of all these Actions, could not but discover that they were all manifestly foretold of the Messias by the Prophets, and were consequently to be necessarily perform'd by him. Not to say that the Resurrection being the far greatest and most Illustrious Miracle, might reasonably be supposed to have produced a greater effect upon their minds, than any precedent Action. And how the subsequent performance of Actions and Mysteries foretold by Christ, contributed in the Apostles to a right understanding of the predictions and Mysteries themselves, appears from the whole History of the Gospel, more especially from those two passages, which I before produced, *John* II. 22. *When therefore he was risen from the dead, his Disciples remembred that he had said this unto them, and they believed the Scriptures*, and again *John* XII. 16. *These things understood not his Disciples at the first, but when Jesus was glorified, then remembred they that these things were written of him.* Vol. I.

Nay

Vol. I. Nay ſo much did Chriſt himſelf attribute to the cogency of the proof which might be drawn from the Miracle of his Reſurrection; that to the Jews, deſiring a convictive proof of his divine Miſſion, he aſſigned no other, than that *as* Jonas *was in the Whales Belly three Days and three Nights, ſo the Son of Man ſhould continue* no longer a ſpace of time *in the Heart of the Earth.* And however his other Miracles, and the Teſtimony of the Prophets, abundantly demonſtrated the Divinity of his Miſſion to unprejudiced Perſons; yet in ſome places, he ſeems willing to pardon their ſuſpenſion of aſſent, till they ſhould ſee this grand and final Miracle performed. Thus in the words preceding my Text, aſſuring his Apoſtles, that though he departed for a while, he ſhould Live again: He tells them, that *at that Day,* (the Day of his Reſurrection) *ye ſhall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.* And *John* VIII. 28. Diſputing with the incredulous Jews, and not being able to convince their obſtinate ſtupidity, he ſaith unto them: *When ye have lift up the Son of Man, then ſhall ye*

ye know, that I am He. And this in some measure mitigates and excuseth the present ignorance of the Apostles, that they had not yet seen the completion of the last and greatest Acts of Christ, particularly his Resurrection. Vol. I.

Lastly, To say no more, the extraordinary Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghost, were not yet poured forth. Of these Gifts, none of the least was a due preparation of Will, and penetration of Judgment. to conceive rightly the sence and meaning of all Divine Revelations and Mysteries. This was afterwards plentifully poured down upon the Apostles, as upon this Day; but before that time, was not conferred on them. That the want of this extraordinary assistance of the Holy Ghost, was a main cause of their Ignorance, is plainly insinuated by all those Texts, wherein Christ promiseth to the Apostles the Mission of the Holy Spirit to dispel their Ignorance, and enlighten their understandings, as in the words of the Text, and *John* XV. 26. *But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the*

the Father, he shall Testify of me; and when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth. The ordinary assistance of the Divine Spirit, had indeed all along accompanyed the Apostles, which had been abundantly sufficient (when added to the Motives of Faith, and advantages of Instruction, which they received from Christ) to inform them in all things necessary, considered as private Persons, if they had removed all prejudices, and used due attention and reason; but the extraordinary Inspiration of the Holy Ghost, being not necessary, was not yet conferred on them: *For the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified.* St. *John* VII. 39.

These were the principal causes of that Ignorance of the Apostles, which we proposed to inquire into; of that misapprehension of the Nature of our Saviours Office and Design, which so eminently appears in the context, as we before explained it, which disabled them from considering the consequence of his Miracles, *For their heart was hardned*, Mark VI. 52. by reason of which, *They understood none of these things*, (his Passion and Resurrection)

on) and *this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things that were spoken*, Luc. XVIII. 34. which caused *the words* of the women, relating to the Resurrection of Christ, *to seem to them as idle Tales*, and incredible Fables, *Luc.* XXIV. 11. and the indignation of which drew from Christ that sharp Exprobation, *O ye of little faith*, *Matt.* VIII. 26. Vol. I.

That this Ignorance ought not in the least to surprize us, or induce us to entertain any thoughts prejudicial to Christianity it self, appears from the Reasons, which I have already assigned to it; but will more fully be manifested in considering the second Head proposed; which was

To shew, That the permission of this Ignorance, till the sending of the Holy Ghost, was not in the least repugnant to the Divine Wisdom, or the design of the Gospel. This will evidently appear from these two Considerations.

I. That it would be incongruous to the Divine Wisdom, to use any extraordinary methods in removing the Ignorance of the Apostles, and perfectly informing their Understandings,

Vol. 1. until such Information, not being possible to be obtained by the ordinary methods of Instruction, should become absolutely necessary to the being of the Church.

II. That such a perfect and plenary Information was not necessary to the Apostles till after the Ascension of Christ.

The first of these Propositions naturally follows from that known truth and received principle, that God never worketh Miracles without necessity, nor recurreth to extraordinary causes, while natural and ordinary will suffice. However, fully to evince this matter, and clear all remaining doubts, I will consider all the possible methods of perfectly instructing the Apostles before the Ascension of Christ, when the natural and ordinary means failed; and demonstrate that God could not use any one of them, without being injurious to his Wisdom and Honour. These extraordinary methods may be reduced to these three Heads.

First, God by his Almighty power might have over-ruled their understanding, and without expecting the assent of the Will, violently imprinted

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a perfect knowledge of his Revelations in it, or even forced the Will to assent to it, although it had not yet discovered the truth of it. But nothing can be imagined more injurious to the honour of God, than a proceeding of this kind, to prepare the way for Religion, by violating those Priviledges of reasoning and free will, which he at first conferred on them; which were in truth to make Mankind happy by destroying their Nature. Vol. I.

Secondly, our Saviour having already abundantly convinced the Apostles of the Divinity of his Mission, and consequently of his Infallibility; might have plainly and openly revealed to them all the Mysteries of his Religion, and future Actions to be yet performed; and required their immediate Assent to them, without taking care to satisfie them at the same time of the truth, and reasonableness of such Revelations, by their Conformity to all precedent Revelations, or the Law of Nature; but this also was irrational in it self, and consequently unworthy of the Divine Wisdom, and might justly have been esteemed unsatisfactory by the Apostles.

Vol. 1. For as they were fully convinced, that our Saviour was a Divine Person, so were they no less, that all the precedent Revelations were delivered by inspired men, and consequently deserved the same degree of Assent, which his could do. So that if the least repugnance between the Doctrine or Life of Christ, and the ancient Prophesies could have been discovered; they were not in the least obliged to assent unto them. Nay, to a full and unexceptionable Proof of the truth of his Revelations, it was not only necessary that no repugnance between them and the predictions of the Old Testament were discovered; but also that an entire Conformity should appear: Since the true Messias was by God designed to the Jews under those two Characters, of extraordinary Miracles, and perfect agreement of Life, Actions and Doctrine to the precedent Predictions and Revelations, and consequently could not be evidently distinguished, without the concurrence of both those Proofs.

And indeed such an arbitrary Command of a blind Assent, to any Revelation

lations confirmed by Miracles, without a previous Examination of the truth of them, is so absurd, and repugnant to the Laws of reasoning; that it could not be used by Christ himself, even in respect of Heathens. For such a resignation of the Understanding, could rationally be made to no other Authority, than an Authority founded upon Arguments of greater Credibility, than can be found in any other Case. But such is not the Authority derived from Miracles; for all objects of Sense and necessary Deductions from reason, include at least an equal, many a greater degree of Credibility. I mean not hereby that any truths whatsoever can have a greater certainty, than those which are revealed by God, supposing them to have been indeed revealed; but only, that any such Revelation is really made, can appear no otherwise, than by Arguments of probability. Vol. I.

Thirdly, a perfect knowledge of all the Mysteries of Religion, might have been extraordinarily obtained by the Apostles, before the Ascension of our Saviour; by conferring on them the same Gifts of the Holy Ghost, as

Vol. 1. were afterwards poured on them on they day of Pentcoſt. But neither was this convenient to the deſign of the Goſpel, nor the Wiſdom of God. Not to the former. For the plentiful Effuſion and Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, was an Act of the Regal power of Chriſt, which he commenced not till after his Aſcenſion, when he firſt began to exerciſe that Authority which he had obtained to himſelf by the obedience of Death. And therefore our Saviour tells the Apoſtles, S. Joh. XVI. 7. *Nevertheleſs I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you, that I go away. For if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will ſend him unto you.* And in another place, this is aſſigned as the Reaſon, why the Holy Ghoſt was not yet given; *becauſe Jeſus was not yet glorified.* The Wiſdom of God alſo was no leſs engaged, which might juſtly have been arraigned, if he had uſed ſo wonderful and ſignal a Mirale, as was the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, for the extraordinary inſtruction of the Apoſtles, before the Aſcenſion of our Lord; ſince no ſuch Inſtruction was yet neceſſary: which was the

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ſecond Point I propoſed to prove: Namely, Vol. I.

II. That a perfect and infallible Information of the Apoſtles, was not abſolutely neceſſary till after the Aſcenſion of Chriſt. For this was required in the Apoſtles for no other cauſe, than that they might thereby be inabled to teach the Doctrines of our Saviour to the whole world, and at laſt deliver them down in writing to ſucceeding Ages, infallibly and without danger of any intermixed Errour; to the ſuſpicion of which the Chriſtian Religion would ever have been ſubjected, if they had not been indued with ſuch clearneſs of apprehenſion concerning every Point of it, and attended by ſuch an extraordinary aſſiſtance, as might ſecure them from all poſſible danger of miſtaking the Senſe of that Doctrine, which they were to deliver to the reſt of Mankind.

To create this clear apprehenſion in the Apoſtles, and convey down this aſſiſtance to them, was the chief intention of ſending the Holy Ghoſt as upon this day, and the principle effect of that Miſſion, at leaſt as far as I am

Vol. I. at present concerned. So that since the sending of the Holy Ghost, was designed purely to enable them to the due execution of their Office of preaching, and propagating the Doctrine of Christ to the whole world; which Office was not to be commenced till after his Ascension; it manifestly follows, that an exact and infallible knowledge of the Mysteries of the Christian Religion, was not absolutely necessary to the Apostles before that time. A perfect knowledge would have been useful indeed to them, even before that time; but useful to them only as private Persons, not as bearing the publick Office and Character of Apostles; whose Office before the Ascension of our Saviour consisted, as we before observed, in taking notice of the Actions, Sufferings, and Miracles of Christ; that they might be able afterwards to testifie them to the whole world. This Office of observing the Actions of Christ, required no exact and perfect knowledge of all the Reasons of his Actions, and Mysteries of his Doctrine, but might be sufficiently discharged by any Persons, who were not devoid of common Sense and Honesty.

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The Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt was neceſſary upon Reaſons of another nature, and would have continued neceſſary, although the Apoſtles had perfectly underſtood all the Doctrine of our Saviour before his Aſcenſion. For however, they might then ſufficiently underſtand it; nothing leſs than a perpetual extraordinary aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, could infallibly ſecure them from all future Errour, in delivering it to others; or create ſuch a degree of probability, as might deſerve the Aſſent and Belief of Mankind in all future Ages. Vol. I.

Thus I have ſhewn the Reaſons of that Ignorance of the Apoſtles, which is ſo remarkable through all the Hiſtory of the Goſpels, and for which, our Saviour promiſeth ſo extraordinary a remedy in the words of my Text; and withal demonſtrated, that there is nothing in all this Conduct of the Apoſtles continuing under that Ignorance, till the Aſcenſion, and of our Saviour permitting it till that time, diſadvantageous to the Truth, and Divinity of the Chriſtian Religion. It remains, that I draw ſome few Concluſions

Vol. 1. cluſions from what hath been ſaid, which was the third and laſt Propoſal.

First then, if, as we before ſhewed, our Saviour and the Apoſtles, who were unqueſtionably infallible, never ſet up themſelves for infallible Judges, nor required from their Hearers a blind Aſſent to their Dictates; if they ſubmitted their Doctrines to the Examination of Scripture and Judgment of all private men; in vain do any at this day pretend, in vertue of an Authority derived from them, to ſet up themſelves for infallible Judges of Controverſie; from whom lyeth no Appeal, either to Scripture or Reaſon; and thereby exerciſe a Juriſdiction, which they never claimed. But I wave that Particular; and chooſe rather to inſiſt on ſome more practical Conſiderations. Of which

The firſt is, That if the knowledge of the Chriſtian Religion was ſo difficult to the Apoſtles, who enjoyed ſo many, and ſo great advantages under the Inſtruction, and Government of their Divine Maſter, the Author of this Religion; if after the ſight of his Mirales, the Enjoyment of a trien-

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nial Converſation; and the conſtant hearing of his Divine Diſcourſes, they continued ignorant of the true Spirit, and Nature of Chriſtianity; this ought to excite us to great diligence in learning, and ſtudying the Myſteries of our Religion, and enquiring the true Senſe of thoſe Revelations, which our Saviour conveyed to the world. Vol. 1.

It is indeed the peculiar Excellency and Glory of the Chriſtian Religion, that its admirable ſimplicity hath fited it to the Underſtandings and Capacity of all men; that it is not ſuch an abſtruce Science, as ſurmounts the ordinary reach of Mankind, and muſt intirely be confined to the Diſcipline of the Schools, and knowledge of Learned men; the acquiſition and underſtanding of it, is poſſible, and even eaſie to all men. But then God in propoſing this Religion, intended not purely to ſupercede the Labours of men, and conſult their eaſe. Some Conditions are alſo neceſſary on our ſide, that we diligently ſearch the Truth, examine the Scriptures, hearken to the inſtruction of our Paſtors, carefully weigh the Reaſons of things, and

Vol. 1. and bring a mind ready diſpoſed to aſſent to any Truths, which ſhall evidently appear to us; how contrary ſoever they might be to our Paſſions and Inclinations. For although we labour not with thoſe prejudices, of a temporal Kingdom to be founded by the Meſſias, or expected from him, which ſo long clouded the Underſtandings of the Apoſtles, and hindred them from entertaining true Notions of that Myſtery; although having the Happineſs to be brought up in a Chriſtian and Orthodox Church, we ſuck in true Notions of the Chriſtian Religion in general, even from our Infancy: yet the prejudices which ariſe from our Paſſions and corrupt Affections, are no leſs violent, and betray us to no leſs fatal miſtakes. Theſe not only defeat the Benefit of that aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, in the Inquiſition of truth, which God hath promiſed to all well diſpoſed Perſons, who rightly ask it of him; but alſo directly introduce the fouleſt and moſt pernicious Errours, by prompting us to form ſuch Notions of Religion, as may be moſt adapted, and favourable to thoſe corrupt Inclinations. And this

this diligence in the Inquiry, and Examination of our Religion, will be so much the more neceſſary, if we conſider, that God had indeed provided an effectual remedy for all the miſtakes of the Apoſtles, by the plentiful Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt upon them; but hath left us to the ordinary Emanations, and Aſſiſtance of the Divine Spirit; which will lead us into all neceſſary Truths, if our own Endeavours be not wanting: but upon defect of thoſe, or any other due diſpoſition of the mind, will not only, not produce this happy Effect, but alſo depart from us. Vol. I.

II. The Senſe of this great and ineſtimable Benefit conferred this day upon the Apoſtles, and then upon the whole Church, and our ſelves in particular; ought to excite us to the utmoſt gratitude, and engage us to endeavour not to render our ſelves unworthy of it, at leaſt, not permit our ſelves to be ungrateful for it. For this Benefit was not confined to the perſons of the Apoſtles; it brings down with it many great and ineſtimable advantages to the Church, which continue till this day.

By

Vol. 1. By this we are assured, that the Christian Religion hath received the last degree of Confirmation; by this we know that Christ hath really ascended into Heaven; and there taken possession of his Kingdom: that however he hath removed his corporeal Presence, he still continues to be present with us, by the Influences and Operations of the Holy Ghost; that he ceased not at his Ascension, to govern and take care of the Church; but abundantly provided for the necessity and convenience of it, by sending the third Person of the ever Blessed Trinity, who might actuate and direct it; and performing the Office of a Paraclet, teach, exhort, comfort and intercede for every single Member of it. By this the drooping Spirits of the Apostles were erected, their Fears dispelled, and their Minds enlightened; by this the truth of the Christian Religion, was put past all Dispute, and the Church invigorated with such an assurance of Divine assistance, as might secure it from all Dangers, and place it beyond the rage of men, or fury of Tyrants.

We

We also at this day partake of the blessed Effects of this great Benefit; we share in the Joys of the Apostles, and experience the Influences of that Divine Spirit. By this they were inabled to convey down to us infallibly the Christian Religion; and found a Church, of which to be Members we esteem our greatest Happiness. By this Spirit we are united to the Body of the Church; to Christ our Head, and to one another. By this we are excited to vertue and the practice of our Duty, are assisted in the search of Truth, are comforted in Afflictions, and upheld in Dangers. This Spirit our Saviour promised, ver. 16. *should abide with us for ever*; not in that measure indeed, and abundance which was conferred on the Apostles, but according to the proportion of our necessities, and the Improvement of that present Portion, which is already conferred on us. Let us endeavour by an exact discharge of our Duty, and daily improvement in Piety, to augment our Interest in the benefits of this Day, and favour of the Holy Ghost: at least let us take care, least by our negligence and degenerate Behaviour

Vol. I. haviour we forfeit our Title to them both.

Lastly, as we are obliged to admire, and celebrate the infinite Goodness of God, in bestowing upon the Church the diffusive Presence of the Holy Ghost, by his Mission as upon this Day; so are we no less engaged to be thankful for his particular Presence in the Holy Sacrament: since this not only gives us a firm assurance of the continuance of that Presence, which was at first granted, as so great a Blessing to the Apostles; but also derives down upon all worthy Communicants, as far as is necessary to them, the same Gifts and Graces, which the first Descent of it procured to the Apostles. By this means we may not only commemorate, but act a new, and experience in our selves all the Glories of this day, by receiving into our Souls a plentiful Effusion of the same Spirit.

But then as several prævious Dispositions were required in the Apostles to qualifie them for the reception of so great a Benefit; so must we prepare our selves for the participation of so great a Mystery, with no less diligence and caution; that as they firmly believed,

lieved, and constantly expected the Promises of our Saviour although he had removed his Corporeal Presence from them; so we should without any Fluctuation believe the certain performance of all those Graces, which are promised to all worthy Communicants, and that however his natural Body is absent from us, yet he is really present in the Elements, by the Efficacy and Operation of the Holy Spirit; that as they prepared themselves for the reception of the Holy Ghost, by an intire Resignation of their Wills to his influence and direction; so we should fit our Souls for the Entertainment of all those Graces conferred in the Sacrament, by a perfect Resignation of our selves to God, and steady Resolution of performing his Commands. And that as they, in order to obtain the promised Mission of a Comforter, met all together with one accord in one house; so we in order to receive the mighty Benefits of this Sacrament, should be united in perfect Charity to one another. If any of these due Qualifications be wanting, we shall be so far from obtaining any share in

Vol. 1. the Benefits of this Day, or Commemorating as we ought the wonderful Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, that we ſhall forfeit our Title to all the Benefits of the Goſpel, and *do deſpight to the Spirit of Grace*. Now to God the Father, God the Son, *&c.*

The

The Second SERMON.

PREACH'D

Septemb. 16th. 1688.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Philip. II. 5.

Let this mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus.

OUR bleſſed Saviour hath not only revealed to us the whole Will of God in relation to Mankind, and thereby given to us a moſt excellent, and truly Divine Religion; but alſo ſet us a moſt perfect Example of Holineſs, and univerſal Righteouſneſs in the whole Conduct of his Life, therein exceeding all other Law-givers, whether Divine or Humane; who never could equal the

Vol. 1. Excellency of their Laws by the ſpotleſs Sanctity of their Lives.

Even *Moſes*, who had this Teſtimony from God, that *he was faithful in all his Houſe*, did not always preſerve inviolate that intire reliance on the Divine Power, which he ſo earneſtly, and ſo often recommended to his People; but offended at the waters of ſtrife, and *was provoked to ſpeak unadviſedly with his lips*. As for other Lawgivers, whoſe Pretences to Revelation were either none or feigned, they were little ſollicitous to recommend the Practice of their Laws by their Example; thereby giving juſt occaſion to ſuſpect, that they intended them rather for Politick than Religious ends: not ſo much to promote vertue, as to ſecure their own Intereſt.

It is the peculiar advantage of the Chriſtian Religion, that all the Precepts of it were exactly performed in the perſon of its Founder, who gave us not only a Rule, but an Example of perfect Piety. In him all Noble and Divine Vertues eminently ſhone forth; and yet in ſuch a manner, as might rather attract our Imitation, than dazzle our Contemplation. Juſtly

ly did he ſay of himſelf, (*John* IX. 5.) that *while he was in the world, he was the light of the world*; directing all Perſons the way to happineſs, by his illuſtrious Example; and in the higheſt degree practiſing all thoſe Vertues, which in other Perſons were ſingly admired. Inſomuch as we may juſtly apply to him, in reſpect of all the parts of our Duty to God, our ſelves, and others, what he ſaid of himſelf in reſpect of Humility: For, *I have given you an example, that ye ſhould do as I have done to you*, *Joh.* XIII. 15. For it is not ſufficient for us his Diſciples, to admire the Greatneſs, and Excellency of his example; he requires farther of us, to do as he hath done: that we expreſs our obedience to him by the conſtant Imitation of his Life and Practice: that we continue the remembrance of his incomparable Vertue and Piety, by propoſing them as a Pattern of perfection in all our Actions: That we manifeſt our ſelves to be his Followers by the ſimilitude of our Conduct: in a word, that *the ſame mind be in us, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus.* Vol. 1.

Vol. 1. In treating of theſe words, I ſhall divide my Diſcourſe into three Heads.

I. I will ſhew that the Life of our Saviour was by God intended to be the Grand Example and Pattern of our Actions.

II. That it was the beſt and moſt compleat Example which could be propoſed to us.

III. I will produce ſome Arguments inducing us to a careful Imitation of this Example.

I. That the Life of our Saviour Chriſt was intended to be the grand Pattern and Example of our Actions. This appears not only from hence, that it is the Duty of all Chriſtians to live up to the Rules of Piety, Temperance, and Juſtice, which the Goſpel preſcribeth, and our Saviour in the moſt perfect manner practiſed, and conſequently to conform our Lives to his Example, which however indirect, is yet a moſt evident Argument; but alſo from many other direct Arguments: Of which I ſhall name ſome few.

1. It appears from the whole Sequel, and deſign of the four Goſpels: One great part of which is taken up in relating

relating those Actions of our *Saviour*, which serve only to demonstrate his admirable Vertue and Holiness. In the whole Conduct of our Saviour, and the History of it, contained in the Gospels, we may chiefly observe four Kinds of Matters, which the Holy Ghost hath thought fit to convey to us, by the writing of inspired Persons: his Miracles; the Conformity of his Life, Death, and all the Circumstances of them, to the antient preceding Prophesies concerning the Messias; his Doctrines; and his Actions. Of these, the two first lead us to the knowledge of Christ, the two latter direct us in it. Vol. I.

By his Miracles, and the Conformity of his Life to the antient Prophesies of the Messias, he abundantly proved himself to be a Divine Person, the Son of God, and the true Messias, *Who was to come into the world.* By his Doctrines and Practice, he hath taught us the way to attain the same Happiness, into which he is gone before us. Now if we observe, how great a part of the Gospel is taken up in relating Matters of the last sort; if we consider, that the Evangelists

Vol. 1. have taken no leſs care to accquaint us with theſe, than with his Doctrines, the immediate Rule of our Belief and Practice: We cannot but conclude, that they alſo were intended for a certain and infallible Rule of our Life and Conduct, and propoſed as the Object of our Imitation.

The Holy Ghoſt aſſureth us, That *all Scripture was written for our Inſtruction*: and although this is undoubtedly true, of all parts of the Divine Scripture; yet can it not with ſuch evidence of Truth be affirmed of any part of it, as of the Holy Goſpels; which contain the Hiſtory of our Saviours Life and Actions. Theſe the Church in all Ages eſteemed the moſt conſiderable part of that ſacred Rule, which was committed to her Care, and given for her Direction. It manifeſtly appears to have been the deſign of each Evangeliſt apart to deliver a compleat Syſtem of all things neceſſary to be known and done by all Chriſtians; and yet all conſpired in nothing more, than in giving a full Relation of the Vertues and Graces of our Bleſſed Saviour; a plain Argument, that the Holy Ghoſt which directed

rected those sacred Pen-men, and whose infallible Wisdom doth nothing in vain, thought nothing more necessary than it to the knowledge of all Christians. It becomes us, as to adore the admirable Wisdom and Goodness of God in this Matter; so to take Care, least by neglecting to imitate the Example so studiously and fully proposed to us, we defeat his most wise Contrivance. Vol. I

2. It is evidently manifest from the express Testimony of Scripture. Our Saviour after he hath performed that stupendious Act of Humility, in washing his Disciples feet, (*John* XIII.) tells them (*ver.* 15.) For, *I have given you an example, that ye should do, as I have done to you*: thereby intimating, that by that Ceremony he designed nothing else than to teach them Humility; that they should not presume to retain high Conceptions of their own worth and merit, much less Pride and Ambition; when they had seen him, their Lord and Master condescend to execute the meanest Office of a Servant to them, who were his domestick Servants. And indeed the Action could be designed for no other end.

It

Vol. I. It had nothing miraculous in it, tended not to the Completion of any antient Propheſie, ſerved not to demonſtrate the Divinity of his Perſon, and indeed, had nothing excellent or admirable in it, but as it conduced to this end. And what greater Arguments can we deſire of the Life of Chriſt being propoſed for our Imitation, than that many of his Actions aimed at no other end, than to draw us to the Practice of the moſt noble Vertues by the Authority of his Example, and direct us by the clearneſs of it?

But this is not all. The Apoſtles having once converted Men to the belief and obedience of Chriſt; thought no Argument more powerful to perſwade them to the practice of all Chriſtian Graces, than the Example of their Divine Maſter. This they urge upon all occaſions, and with this they recommend their Precepts and Counſels. Particularly St. *Peter* (1 *Pet.* II.) exhorting all Chriſtians to Patience under Sufferings, and a conſtant Reſolution to endure the moſt grievous Afflictions, and even Death it ſelf, for the ſake of their Religion, a Duty which may juſtly be accounted the greateſt

greateſt and moſt difficult of Chriſtia- Vol. 1.
nity; giveth this Reaſon for it, (*Ver.* 21.)
For even hereunto were ye called, becauſe Chriſt alſo ſuffered for us, leaving us an Example, that we ſhould follow his ſteps. By which Reaſon he manifeſtly ſhews, that it is the indiſpenſible Duty of Chriſtians to follow the Example of Chriſt, and that thereunto we are chiefly called, otherwiſe he could never have inferred from thoſe words, that it was an Obligation incumbent upon all Chriſtians, to be patient under Sufferings and Adverſities; this being but a Conſequence of that grand and more general Duty. However, that we may not doubt of it? we are told, That *he who ſaith, he abideth in Chriſt, ought himſelf alſo ſo to walk, even as he walked*, 1 *Joh.* II. 6. And in another place, *If any man hath not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of Chriſt's.* So that if the command and intention of our Saviour can oblige us, if the Senſe of our Duty, and Exhortation of the Apoſtles can move us, if the deſire of Union with Chriſt, and being accounted Members of his Body can perſwade us, we have on all ſides abundant Reaſon to apply our

ſelves

Vol. 1. ſelves to the ſerious Imitation of his moſt holy Example.

3. That the Example of the Bleſſed Jeſus was intended for our Direction, may be gathered from the manner of his triennial Preaching before his Paſſion. This conſiſted not ſo much in revealing the Myſteries of the Goſpel, and inculcating the knowledge of his Office, and the Redemption of Mankind, which he deſigned; as in performing illuſtrious Miracles, and ſhewing in his Perſon, a no leſs illuſtrious Pattern of conſummate Vertue, which, after his Reſurrection being teſtified to the World by his Apoſtles and Diſciples, the Eye-witneſſes of his Life and Actions, might convince Mankind, that he was in all Reſpects a Divine Perſon, and when once convinced, might engage them to the Practice of their Duty, and direct them in it by the Luſtre of his own Example. That this, not the clear Revelation of the Myſteries of Faith, was the grand Deſign of his triennial Miniſtry, may be concluded from the groſs Ignorance of the Apoſtles concerning thoſe things, not only during that time, but even after his

his Reſurrection: Inſomuch, as they asked their Lord, being now ready to aſcend up into Heaven; *Lord, wilt thou at this time reſtore again the Kingdom to Iſrael?* (*Acts* I. 6.) They laid not aſide their Prejudices, and falſe Expectations of a temporal Meſſias, till the Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon them enlightned their Minds, and diſpelled their Ignorance. Vol. I.

Now if the compleat Inſtruction of his Diſciples, had been the chief deſign of our Saviour while on Earth, we cannot without Injury to his infinite Wiſdom imagine, that he ſhould ſo far fall ſhort of his aim, and not be able to effect his Purpoſe.

So that the great Intention of this triennial Office, ſeems to have been no other, than to give abundant Proof of his Divine Miſſion by Miracles, and the Completion of the antient Propheſies, to finiſh the great work of our Redemption upon the Croſs, and exhibit in his own Perſon an Example of moſt perfect Holineſs: that ſo all theſe things being after his Aſcenſion teſtified to the World by his Apoſtles; the former might ſerve for the Conviction, the latter for the direction of Mankind.

And

Vol. 1. And accordingly it may be obſerved, that the Apoſtles conſulting about chooſing one into their number, in the room of *Judas* the Traitor, required, before all things, this Qualification in the Perſon to be choſen, (*Acts* I. 21.) That *he ſhould be one of thoſe which had accompanied with them, all the time that the Lord Jeſus went in and out among them.* By which phraſe the Jews were wont to deſign the moral Converſation, Life, and Conduct of any Man.

Even the Miracles of our Saviour tended no leſs to demonſtrate his admirable Vertue, than Almighty Power; they all carry evident Characters of his Love, Beneficence, and Charity to Mankind; and were employed in curing the Diſeaſes, healing the Infirmities, and relieving the Neceſſities of Men; that ſo his Goodneſs and Power might equally appear in the ſame Actions. And thus it appears, that one great end of our Saviours coming into the World, was to give an excellent Example to it.

Laſtly, the Truth of this, is manifeſt from the Conſideration of the manner, and quality of our Saviours Conduct, which was peculiarly adapted to the

the nature and condition of Mankind, and thereby rendred a fit Object of Imitation to it. The Holineſs and Vertue of our Saviour, which ſo eminently appeared in the whole Deportment of his Life, was eaſie, humane, and natural. It conſiſted not in elaborate Auſterities, and rigid Acts of Mortification; aimed at no ſuch extraordinary Flights of Apparent Holineſs, as might amaze rather than inſtruct Men, and by the Greatneſs of them deter them from Imitation. His Deportment was grave, and compoſed: his Piety plain, and unaffected: his Devotion, ſober and rational. Vol. 1.

We may diſcover far more evident ſtrokes of Auſterity, and Mortification in the Life of *John* the Baptiſt, not that the Vertue of our Saviour was leſs perfect, but more humane. Such extraordinary Acts of apparent Religion, were neceſſary to *John* the Baptiſt, to excite the attention of the Jews to his Meſſage and Preaching. For ſince he came not inveſted with the power of Miracles, ſomewhat was neceſſary to him, to fix the Eyes of the world upon him, and create a Belief among the Jews, that he was a Divine Prophet.

Vol. 1. Prophet. To this end it was required, That *he ſhould come in the Spirit of* Elias; that is, not only poſſeſs the ſame Zeal for the Divine Honour, and uſe the ſame unwearied Diligence, for reſtoring decayed Religion among the Jews; but alſo practice the ſame Rigours and Macerations of his Body, and procure to himſelf reſpect by the ſame Characters of external Holineſs.

Not that theſe unuſual Auſterities had any thing excellent in themſelves, or were any certain Indications of a more refined Vertue; but were abſolutely neceſſary to him, for the end before mentioned. And therefore our Saviour, who wanted no ſuch Recommendation (his Divine Miſſion being abundantly teſtified by his Miracles) and whoſe Life was to be the ſtanding Rule of Piety and Vertue to all Ages; exerciſed no ſuch wonderful Auſterities, but gave us a more eaſie and natural Example, which might not ſurpaſs the common reach of Mankind; adapted it to our Imitation; and performed no Actions (if we except thoſe, which plainly referred either to his Prophetick, Sacerdotal, or Kingly Office) which might not equally be performed

formed by all orders and conditions of Men. So admirable was his Conduct, so wisely accommodated to effectuate its design, that is, to serve for an universal Example to all his Followers. A design, in which the Goodness and Wisdom of God, are equally visible; as might be shewed by many Considerations. I shall instance but in two. Vol. 1.

First, To propose the Example of our Saviour, as an Object of imitation to all Christians, was an excellent means to allure them to the Practice of their Duty, and a sure method to direct them in it. It hath been an old Observation, confirmed by the Experience of all Ages, that Men are led more powerfully by Example, than precept. Men are ordinarily induced to imitate the Actions of those Persons, for whom they retain a mighty awe and reverence; they imagine somewhat extraordinary to be in them all; and believe the only method to attain the same Greatness, is to practice the same Actions. If this natural inclination of Mankind be directed in the right Channel, nothing tends more effectually to promote the great Ends

Vol. I. of Piety and Holineſs among Men. On the contrary, the bad Example of great and powerful Perſons hath debauched whole Nations, and withdrawn them from their Duty.

Thus we find in the Hiſtory of the Old Teſtament, that Religion conſtantly flouriſhed or decayed among the Jews, according to the diſpoſition and example of their Princes. Bad Princes drew the whole Nation into Apoſtacy with them; and Good ones reſtored the Worſhip of the true God in the hearts of all their Subjects. *Ahab's* Example introduced among the ten Tribes ſo univerſal an Idolatry, that he left but *Seven thouſand men in* Iſrael, *who bowed not their knees to* Baal. And the Piety of King *Joſiah*, wrought ſuch a general Reformation in his People; That *from the time of the Judges, which judged* Iſrael, *there was not ſuch a Paſſover holden to the Lord.*

To improve this Inclination therefore of Mankind to their own advantage and his Glory, God hath given to us the Example of his only Son; which carrieth greater Inducements along with it, than that of any earthly

earthly Princes. For if Majeſty and the Greatneſs of Power be the chief motive of Imitation, our Exemplar is no leſs than God incarnate; and what Honour, as well as Perfection, muſt it needs be for Mankind, to imitate the Vertues and Excellencies of their Creator? If kindneſs, and the Senſe of extraordinary Benefits can incite us to Imitation; our Saviour hath engaged us by wonders of Mercy, and the moſt amazing Acts of endearing Love. And in what better manner can we expreſs our gratitude to our Redeemer, than by a perfect Conformity to his Life and Actions? If the hopes of obtaining the ſame Happineſs can move us; our Saviour hath propoſed a reward of the ſame Nature, a Manſion in the ſame place of Glory with himſelf, to all who labour to attain it by the exerciſe of the ſame Vertues. All theſe Conſiderations cannot fail to make the Example of Chriſt infinitely more efficacious, than that of any mortal Creature. Vol. 1.

But this is not all: It is found by the ſame Experience, and upon the ſame Reaſons; that Mankind is taught more effectually by Example, than by

Vol. I. Precept. The greateſt part of Men have but dark Notions of the Nature of good and evil. They cannot eaſily diſcern what Actions are in themſelves perfective of humane Nature, and pleaſing to God, nor diſtinctly perceive the deformity of Sin. Revelation indeed might juſtly be ſuppoſed to ſupply this Defect, and enlighten their Underſtanding; but neither will this give them diſtinct Notions of their Duty, unleſs they ſee the Precepts of it applied by ſome illuſtrious Example. Precepts may be obſcure, difficult and ambiguous; but the conſtant Practice of them, in ſome eminent and reverend Perſon, gives a full and perfect Interpretation of them. And which is moſt conſiderable, Precepts only affect the Underſtanding; Examples ſtrike the Senſe; and thereby in moſt Men make far deeper Impreſſion than the former, although enforced with a thouſand Reaſons. Hence the moſt numerous part of Mankind have ever drawn the meaſure of their Duty from the Example of ſome illuſtrious Perſons; who are commonly reputed and allowed to have lived up to the Dignity, and the Duty of their Nature

Nature and Religion: And esteemed all their Actions good or bad, not as they agreed to the natural Law of reason, or revealed Law of God, but as they were conformable to those Patterns, whose Imitation they had proposed to themselves. Vol. 1.

In vain therefore did the Heathen Philosophers make glorious Descriptions of the Excellency of moral Vertues; in vain did they recommend the practice of them to the World, by their Writings and Discourses; while they continued to represent their Gods, as guilty of the most enormous Vices, and Slaves to their Lusts and Passions. Men chose rather to follow the vitious Examples of their supposed Gods, whom they imagined to be the Fountains of all Perfection; patronized their Crimes by their Examples, and hoped for impunity from their Presidents. How wisely therefore hath God given to us Christians, the most perfect and infallible Example of our Saviour Christ, which might secure our obedience to him: And by proposing to us the utmost Pattern of Perfection, allure us to the Practice of it. By this the meanest Christians are sensibly taught

Vol. 1. their Duty, and directed in it; by this the wiſeſt are enabled to underſtand, and interpret the Divine Precepts in their right ſenſe and meaning.

And not only doth this tend to direct private Chriſtians in the Conduct of their Lives, but alſo to preſerve Purity of Religion in the Church, and diffuſe the true Spirit of Chriſtianity into all the Members of it. A ſtudious Care of imitating the Actions, and Graces of the Bleſſed Jeſus, would above all other Remedies, have obſtructed the entrance of Superſtitions and corrupt Opinions; which than began to creep into the Church, when Men receded from this beſt and primitive Pattern, and out of a fond Veneration for reputed Saints, took more Care to imitate their Example, than that of their Lord and Maſter. This debaſed the Doctrines, and corrupted the Devotions of Chriſtians, betraying them into groſs Superſtitions, eſpecially in the latter Ages of the Church; when many perſons obtained the repute of Saints, who were remarkable for nothing elſe than exorbitant Auſterities, antick Devotions, and irrational Practices: When the Goſpels, which contained

tained the Relation of our Saviours Actions, were locked up in an unknown Tongue: And nothing communicated to the People in the vulgar Language, but Legendary Stories of reputed Saints. To theſe abuſes our Divine Lawgiver had aſſigned an eaſie and natural Remedy, in propoſing the example of himſelf. In the Authors and followers of theſe Corruptions, it was the Crime of ſome to quit this Example, and the unhappineſs of others not fully to know it, and it will be our Happineſs, if we both know and do it. Vol. I.

Secondly, the imitation of our Saviours Example was moſt wiſely propoſed to all his Followers, for this end, that it might convince them, that Chriſtianity was not a meerly Speculative, but a practical Religion. Men would have been willing to have taken up with the bare Contemplation of thoſe Divine Truths, which were by Chriſt revealed to the world, and imagined the bare knowledge of them to be ſufficient; had not our Saviour by his own Example confuted that Opinion, and taught them, that the moſt exalted knowledge was

Vol. 1. not ſufficient without a correſpondent Vertue.

If we view the ſtate of the World at that time in which Chriſt publiſhed his Revelation, we ſhall find nothing to have been more neceſſary to his deſign than this method. All Mankind at that time ſeemed to conſpire in this common Error, that the knowledge of revealed Religions drew no Obligation of practice with them. The Heathens indeed pretended to ſacred Myſteries, and imagined themſelves to know the ſecrets of Heaven: But this knowledge was ſo far from having any influence upon their Lives; that they believed not it ought to have any. The Jews poſſeſſed truly a Divine Religion, yet in a great meaſure defeated the ends of it, by the ſame falſe Opinion. They contented themſelves with the ſatisfaction of *having Abraham to their Father*, and thought nothing elſe was required of them, than to know the Prerogative of their Nation. Even *the Phariſees who ſat in Moſes's Chair*, and pretended to a more ſtrict and perfect Holineſs, laboured indeed to know the Precepts, and Punctilios, of the Law, but believed not them-

themſelves obliged to a Conſcientious performance of it; fondly imagining, that the defect of that would be abundantly ſupplied by the merits of their Deſcent from *Abraham*. So prone is Mankind to this fatal Error, which flatters their eaſe, and indulgeth them in the Exerciſe of their Luſts and Paſſions. Vol. I.

This our Saviour therefore unanſwerably confuted by his own Practice, giving us thereby to underſtand, that his Religion was deſigned no leſs to reform the Wills, than inſtruct the Underſtandings of his Followers. And how neceſſary this Conduct was, appears not only from the prevailing Errors of thoſe times, but alſo from the depraved Inclination of Mankind in all Ages.

Even in our Age, there are not wanting unreaſonable Men, who pretend that Chriſtians are not obliged by the Law of Nature, nor bound to the Practice of it. An Error than which none can be more directly contrary to the Spirit of Chriſtianity, and the whole deſign of the Goſpel. Our Saviour more than once aſſureth us, That *he came not deſtroy, but to fulfil the*

Vol. I. *the Law*, which ſince it cannot be underſtood of the Moſaick, muſt neceſſarily of the Moral Law. This makes the chief Subject of all his Precepts and Exhortations, and in urging this, his famous Sermon upon the Mount, conſiſting of three whole Chapters, is almoſt intirely taken up. Laſtly, That no Argument might be wanting to enforce the Practice of it, he hath recommended it by his own Example. He preſcribed no Duty to us, which he practiſed not invariably in his own Perſon; and as his Religion includeth the whole Duty of Man; ſo himſelf exerciſed it in the moſt eminent and perfect manner; which bringeth me to the ſecond Head propoſed: Namely,

II. That the Life of Chriſt was the beſt, and moſt compleat Example, which could be propoſed to Mankind, as the Object of their Imitation. All other Men were never able to live up exactly to the Rules of their Religion; but *in many things we offend all.* It was Chriſt alone, who performed a conſtant and univerſal Righteouſneſs, *Who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* But to repreſent this Matter more fully to you, I will conſider

ſider the Exemplary Holineſs of our Saviour, in ſome of the more illuſtrious Branches of our Duty to God, our Selves, and the reſt of Mankind. Vol. 1.

Firſt then, in relation to God, to whom, as partaking of the humane Nature, he owed the ſame Subjection that we do, his Piety and Devotion was remarkable. He often withdrew himſelf from his Diſciples, and retired into Solitary places, that he might calmly enjoy the Contemplation of God, and pour out his Soul in Prayers unto him. Sometimes departing late in the Evening alone, *into a Mountain to pray*, (*Matth.* XIV. 23. *John* VI. 16.) Other times riſing up early in the Morning, and withdrawing into a Solitary place, to perform the ſame Office; (*Mark* I. 35.) And more than once ſpending whole Nights in Prayer; thereby teaching us, that we ought to Dedicate ſome time daily to the private Devotions of the Cloſet, where we may converſe with our God by Prayer and Meditation. He oftimes denied to his Body its natural Reſt and Sleep, to enjoy his Father in private Contemplation, and offer up his Petitions to him. And ſhall not we ſet apart ſome of

Vol. I. of our vacant hours, to the Exerciſe of the ſame Piety? Our Subjection to the Divine Majeſty ſurely is not leſs; and our wants infinitely greater. The ſubject of his Prayers could be no other, than to offer up to God the Tribute of praiſe and thankſgiving, and to intercede for others; whereas we, beſides all this, have many ſins to bewail, and to implore the Pardon of them.

Then as for the publick Acts of Religion, which tend moſt directly to increaſe the Honour of God, and procure to him due Adoration amongſt Men, our Saviour manifeſted by his conſtant performance of them, how dear the Glory of God was to him. He frequented all the publick and ſolemn Feſtivals of the Jewiſh Religion, and that whether of Divine, as the Paſſover; or humane Inſtitution, as the Feaſt of Dedication: Omitting no occaſion, whereby he might advance the Divine Honour, by joyning in all the uſual Solemnities of Divine Worſhip. Even in his private State, before he entred upon the Execution of his Miniſterial Office; however ſilent the ſacred Hiſtory be as to his other Actions, yet this

this we are assured, That he used to attend the publick Worship of God, in the Synagogues every Sabbath day. For so St. *Luke* relateth, (*Chap.* IV. 16.) where describing his entrance upon his Ministerial Office, he tells us: *And he came to* Nazareth, *where he had been brought up*; *and, as his Custom was, he went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath day.* What can be now wanting to render this Example of Piety most compleat, and worthy our Imitation? He frequented the publick Acts of Worship, lest we should imagine private Devotion to be sufficient: And intermitted not the pious Exercises of the Closet, least we should rest content with having joyned in the publick Prayers, and proceed no farther. Vol. 1.

If we view the other Characters of Piety and Religion; we shall find them all to have been eminently united in this illustrious Example: With what profound Humility did he profess himself to come into the world, to perform his Fathers Will? How constantly did he ascribe the Glory of all his Works, and Miracles to his Almighty Power? With what admirable Resignation did he yield up himself, to the Divine Will

Vol. 1. Will and diſpoſal? He deprecated indeed the pains of Death, and the terrible Torments of an ignominious Crucifixion; yet all with intire Submiſſion to his Fathers pleaſure: *Nevertheleſs not my Will, but thy Will be done.* A temper of mind, than which none more lively repreſenteth our abſolute Subjection to God, or tends more directly to ſecure real Happineſs to us, both in this Life, and that which is to come. Hereby we own our ſelves to be the Workmanſhip of God, his Creatures, and his Vaſſals, bound to ſubmit to his Will, and receive the ſevereſt Diſpenſations of his Hand with reverence. Hereby we acknowledge the infinite Perfection of his Wiſdom who beſt knows what is moſt convenient for us; and the admirable Contrivances of his Providence, whereby *he maketh all things work together for good to them that fear him.*

This Diſpoſition will alleviate all the Afflictions, and allay all the Tempeſts of this Life, and even place us beyond the reach of all aſſaults on this ſide Heaven; and by rendring our Wills conformable to the Will of God, fit us for the eternal Fruition of him.

This

This bleſſed Temper our Saviour poſ- Vol. 1.
ſeſſed in the higheſt degree; in this
conſiſted the Merits of his obedience;
this exalted him to the right hand of
God; and will infallibly Conduct us
to the ſame Glory, if his moſt excel-
lent Example can invite us to the pra-
ctice of the ſame Duty.

Secondly, The Life and Conduct of
Chriſt, was exemplar in an ardent
Zeal for the Divine Glory. This in-
deed is a neceſſary Conſequence of
true Piety. For this being founded in
a juſt Conception of the Greatneſs
and Excellency of the Divine Attri-
butes, and a due Senſe of our Obli-
gation ariſing from it, cannot ſubſiſt
without an earneſt Concern for the
maintenance and increaſe of the Di-
vine Glory amongſt Men. Can we be
ſaid to love our Creator, and yet pati-
ently endure to hear his Name blaſphe-
med, and his Attributes, perhaps alſo his
Exiſtence, called in queſtion? Can we
truly reverence his adorable Name,
and yet ſecurely ſee it vilified by pro-
phane Perſons, without aſſerting the
Honour of it; or at leaſt teſtifying our
Diſpleaſure at ſuch bare-face't impiety?
Surely this is the leaſt which the pro-
feſſion

Vol. 1. feſſion of our Religion requireth of us. Nor can we juſtly deny that to God, which we afford to the meaneſt Friend, whoſe injured Names we are wont to vindicate, and not hear them reviled without impatience. Our Saviour hath ſet us a moſt excellent Pattern in this kind.

With what Indignation did he receive the Propoſals of the Devil, diſadvantagious to the Honour of his Father? He contented himſelf barely to reject it, but with a *Get thee behind me Satan*, manifeſted how much the very propoſing of it was diſpleaſing to him. But in no occaſion did his Zeal more ſignally appear, than in driving the Money-Changers, Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple. An Action very remarkable, if we conſider all the Circumſtances of it; and which, as appears from the Hiſtory of the Goſpel, was performed by him at two ſeveral times. For St. *John*, (*Chap.* II.) relates it, as being done in the beginning of his Miniſterial Office; and the other three Evangeliſts, as performed immediately before his Paſſion. Therein he had to encounter with a numerous multitude of People, who could plead Preſcription

ſcription, and the Authority of a long Permiſſion for their Traffick in the Temple; Perſons of that profeſſion are not wont to be moved by Reaſon and Argument, when intereſt lies at ſtake. A powerful Garriſon was at hand in the Tower of *Antonias* to repreſs all Seditions in the Temple, and himſelf a ſingle Perſon, armed with no apparent Authority, nor any other weapon than a ſimple Whip. Yet all theſe Difficulties the Bleſſed Jeſus overlooked, that he might vindicate the injured Honour of his Father; diſdaining that *his Fathers houſe ſhould be made an houſe of Merchandiſe*, and that the Temple built for the Honour of his Name, ſhould be turned *into a den of Thieves*. This Holy tranſport of Zeal drew even his Diſciples into Admiration; who could not imagine the reaſon of it, till they remembred that it was written; *The Zeal of thine houſe hath eaten me up*, (*Joh.* II. 17.) Vol. 1.

This vigorous Zeal obtained ever in the Church, while the true Spirit of Chriſtianity was kept up among the Profeſſors of it; and if it be viſibly decayed in our Age; we are certain, that Piety and true Devotion hath decayed

Vol. 1. with it. Among the ancient Chriſtians nothing was eſteemed ſo dear as the Honour of their God and Saviour. This they feared not to vindicate with their deareſt Lives, and thought the expence of their Blood a juſt Tribute to it. They contented not themſelves to make an open profeſſion of their Faith and belief in God, when urged to it; but voluntarily, and unprovoked performed it, when the performance of it was adjudged and puniſhed as a Capital Crime by their Perſecutors. They thronged to the Tribunals of the Heathen Judges, and openly profeſſed themſelves to be Chriſtians, when Racks and Gibbets, and the moſt exquiſite Torments attended the Profeſſion. This was in an eminent manner, *Not to be aſhamed of the Croſs of Chriſt*, and the higheſt Evidence of a moſt fervent Zeal for the Divine Glory.

I will not ſay that this voluntary Profeſſion, and thereby the expoſing of themſelves to the rage of their Enemies, was their Duty. I will not exhort *you* to the like Zeal, which is neither neceſſary, nor practicable in theſe peaceable times of the Church. But certainly, this abundantly condemns the

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Luke-warmneſs of many Chriſtians, who are content to hear the Honour and Majeſty of their Creator defamed by prophane Diſcourſes, when the Vindication of it would coſt them no more than a gentle reproof, or ſome ſmall Teſtimony of diſpleaſure. Vol. I.

Thus our Saviour gave us an excellent Example of our Duty towards God. If we conſider his Life in relation to all thoſe Duties, which every Man oweth to himſelf, we ſhall find it an admirable Pattern of every one of them. His Temperance, Sobriety and Chaſtity were remarkable, neither giving way to Luxurious Pleaſures, nor aiming at great Auſterities. The Phariſees indeed, his profeſſed Enemies, taxed him as *a glutton and wine-bibber, a friend of publicanes and ſinners.*

But this Calumny proceeded as well from their inveterate Rancour and Malice, as from a fond Opinion, that the Vertues of Temperance and Sobriety were inconſiſtent with a free Deportment, and obliging Converſation. To them it ſeemed, that the perfection of Temperance conſiſted in auſtere Macerations of the Body, and an utter Renunciation of all the Conveniences of

Vol. 1. Life, not a ſober in and rational uſe of them. Hence they imagined *John* the Baptiſt only, *Who came neither eating nor drinking, to come in the way of righteouſneſs*; and accuſed the Conduct of our Saviour, *who came eating and drinking* (that is, without any unuſual Abſtinence and Macerations) of Looſeneſs and Intemperance. But as Chriſt truly replyed to them; *herein alſo Wiſdom was juſtified of her Children.* It became not the Wiſdom and Holineſs of the Son of God, to gratifie their falſe Notions of Temperance and Sobriety, by conforming his Practice to them. He choſe rather to exerciſe thoſe Vertues in their genuine Purity; and thereby not only rectifie the miſtakes of Mankind in this Matter, but alſo render his Example convenient to the imitation of all Orders and Ranks of Men.

How far himſelf was above the Temptations of Pleaſure; how little he indulged the eaſe of his Body, or ſought the ſatisfaction of his Senſes and Paſſions; appears from the whole Conduct of his Life. Humility of Mind, and a generous Contentment under the ſevereſt Adverſities, are the moſt genuine Characters of Chriſtianity, which teach-

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eth us, that a mean eſteem of our own Perfections, as it is moſt juſt in it ſelf, ſo alſo moſt acceptable to the Divine Will; that Riches and Honour add nothing to our real Happineſs; that the Reward of our Duty is not to be expected in this Life, and that the Afflictions, which may accompany the performance of it, *are not comparable to the glory, which ſhall be revealed.* Vol. 1.

Of all the Vertues of the Soul, and Precepts of Chriſtianity, Mankind is moſt averſe to theſe. The natural Man is unwilling to believe, that to depreſs his outward Dignity, is the readieſt way to improve his inward worth; and will hardly be perſwaded that Riches and worldly Honour do not in the leaſt conduce to true Felicity. The Heathens had all along adored theſe, more than their great *Diana*; and by deſcribing the Happineſs of their Gods to conſiſt in the uninterrupted Fruition of ſenſual Pleaſures, had introduced an univerſal Opinion among the vulgar, that unhappineſs conſiſted in the want of the ſame Pleaſures. Even the Jews, God's own People, were not free from the ſame Errour. They meaſured their well being, and even the favour of God,

Vol. I. by their outward Proſperity: Being induced thereto, by the very nature and conditions of their Covenant, which openly contained no more than the Promiſes of this Life. To wean Mankind therefore of this fond Opinion, and induce Men to the Reception of a better Covenant, it was neceſſary that our Lord ſhould by his Example, as well as Precepts, promote a juſt Contempt of all ſublunary Enjoyments, and reduce Men to a true Senſe of their own unworthineſs.

This he hath abundantly done, by giving to us an incompa·able Example of Humility, Self-denial, voluntary Poverty, and Contentment, in his own Perſon. His Deſcent from Heaven, and taking humane Fleſh upon him, was in it ſelf a moſt aſtoniſhing Condeſcenſion: That *being in the form of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God; but made himſelf of no Reputation, and took upon him the form of a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of man*, (*Philip.* II. 6, 7.) That is, that being from all Ages no leſs than God Bleſſed for evermore, the Second Perſon of the Eternal Trinity, and equally partaking of the Divine Nature with his Father;

he

he made no pompous Oſtentation of that Equality, nor affected to preſerve his Majeſty inviolate and undiminiſhed; but condeſcended to diveſt himſelf, in appearance, of that Divine Character, and aſſume the Nature, Conditions, and Infirmities of one of his own Creatures, and to be made like unto mortal Man: See a degree of Humility, of which none but the Bleſſed Jeſus was capable; which exceeds even our apprehenſion, as well as Imitation; which may be admired, but never can be attained by us. Vol. 1.

Yet this was not all. For as it Follows in the next Verſe, *Being found in faſhion as a Man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Croſs.* He contented not himſelf to have forſaken the Glories of Heaven, and aſſumed the mean Condition of a Man; but to carry his Condeſcenſion to the utmoſt pitch, he placed himſelf in the loweſt Rank of Men; bore the greateſt Afflictions incident to Mankind; underwent Poverty, Nakedneſs and Contempt, and at laſt ſubmitted to a violent Death, even the Ignominious and painful Death of the Croſs. If he had thought an external ſhew of

Vol. 1. Greatneſs any ways conducive to promote the great Ends, for which he came into the world, or had intended to procure to himſelf thoſe Pleaſures, which Men ſo greedily ſeek after; he might have engroſſed to himſelf all the Riches of the world, and in Royal Magnificence exceeded even the Carnal Expectations of the Jews. Heaven and Earth were intirely at his Devotion, and whole Legions of Angels ready to miniſter to him. But he waved all theſe advantages, ſpent his private years in a Laborious and Mechanick Life, and when he entred on his publick Office, increaſed both his Labour and his Poverty. He willingly wanted all the Conveniences of Life, and even the common benefits of Nature. For as himſelf tells, *The Foxes have holes, and the Birds of the air have neſts, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

Thus he gave us a moſt perfect Pattern of Self-denial, generous Contempt of the world, and Renunciation of all carnal Pleaſures. And ſhall we imagine our ſelves not in the leaſt concerned in all this? Himſelf hath prevented any ſuch miſtakes, by telling us, That *if any one will come after him*, (or be his Diſciple)

Diſciple) *He muſt deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs and follow him.* (*Mat.* XVI. 24.) *And if your Lord and Maſter have waſhed your feet, ye ought alſo to waſh one anothers feet,* (*John* XIII. 14.) And ſurely moſt reaſonably. If the Son of God vouchſafed to undergo all the Calamities incident to Mankind; ſhall we preſume to expect an undiſturbed courſe of outward Happineſs, and murmur at any Afflictions which befal us? If he forſook the Glories of Heaven to redeem us; ſhall not we willingly quit all the Vanities of the Earth to obey him? If he thought it not incongruous to the Majeſty of his Divine Nature, to perform ſuch ſtupendious Acts of Humility; ſhall the greateſt of Men think it unſuitable to their Dignity to be humble with their God, and gentle with their fellow Creatures? Surely if the Divine Precepts cannot engage us to Humility; the Divine Example ſhould ſhame us to it. Vol. I.

Laſtly, in Relation to our Duty to other Men, his Juſtice, Meekneſs and Charity, which are the great Branches of it, were moſt Exemplary. His Juſtice was ſo undeniable, in paying to every Man *fear to whom fear was due, honour*

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Vol. I. *to whom honour*, in injuring no Man, nor juſtly offending any one; that even *Pilate*, whoſe Intereſt it then was, that he ſhould be found guilty, after a ſtrict Examination, and violent Accuſation of his numerous and potent Enemies, was by the Clearneſs of his Innocence forced thrice to declare, That *he could find no fault in him*, (*Luke* XXIII. 14, 22.) Confirming alſo his own Sentence with the concurrent Opinion of *Herod*, a jealous and ſuſpicious Tyrant, to whom he had been ſent, but was fully cleared by him. (*Ver.* 15.) So far was the Holy Jeſus from diſturbing the publick quiet, violating the Rights of the Civil Magiſtrate, invading the Property of his Neighbours, or doing any thing in oppoſition to thoſe common Rights, which are upheld by the Execution of Civil Laws, that neither his imbittered Enemies, nor his corrupt *Judges* could find any Reſemblance of ſuch Actions.

None ever urged a more ſteadfaſt Loyalty to the Supreme Powers; nor demonſtrated a more ready Obedience to the Commands of his Prince in all lawful things, in the whole Conduct of his Life. He not only enjoyned his Diſciples to *render unto Cæſar, the things which*

which are Cæſars, but himſelf exactly performed it, in ſubmitting to his Deputies, in paying to him Tribute, even with the Expence of a Miracle, and in ſtudiouſly declining all the Acclamations of his admiring Followers, which proceeded from the Expectation of a temporal Kingdom to be founded by him. And in this, both the Author and Doctrine of Chriſtianity are eminently diſtinguiſhed from all falſe Religions, which Subjects the common Laws of Juſtice to the intereſt of Religion, and permit them to be freely violated for the Propagation of it. Whereas Chriſtianity hath ſecured the Rights of Princes, whereſoever it hath obtained, and added new Bonds of Obligation to the natural Ties of Juſtice. Such at leaſt was the Spirit of Chriſtianity in the primitive Times; when the cruel Perſecutions, and tyrannical Oppreſſion of three hundred years, could not provoke its Followers to reſiſtance. And ſuch is the Spirit of it at this day, whereſoever the Doctrine of it remains pure *and uncorrupted*. Vol. I.

But to demonſtrate and magnifie the Juſtice of our Saviour, a Vertue common even to moral Heathens, and which

Vol. 1. which would be the Duty of Mankind, in order to preſerve Society, although there were no Religion in the world, might be thought injurious to the eminent perfection of his Holineſs; did not the Experience of latter Ages, and chiefly of our own Times evidence, that not only the Precepts, but alſo the Example of our Lord was neceſſary to recommend this Duty to his Followers. And yet alaſs, both are inſufficient through the obſtinacy of Men. No one Duty is more frequently, or more ſecurely violated by Chriſtians, than that of common Juſtice. It was the Character, which *Pliny* returned to the Emperour *Trajan*, of the Chriſtians, when required to give him an account of their Opinions and Converſation, That *they were innocent and honeſt People, who often meeting to celebrate the publick Worſhip of God, bound themſelves by the moſt ſolemn and ſacred Oaths, not to commit any Acts of Injuſtice, Rapine and Violence, to abſtain from Theft, Oppreſſion and Fraud; to be faithful to their Truſt, and not circumvent their Neighbours.* If that Learned Heathen were now alive, I fear he would not be able to diſcover Chriſtianity by this Note and Character;

racter; and would hardly be perſwaded, that modern Chriſtians were Profeſſours of the ſame Religion. But it is neither my buſineſs nor deſign to arraign the ſcandalous injuſtice of Chriſtians in theſe times. I will only add, That this will increaſe our Condemnation, that herein we have not only violated the Rules of a moſt juſt Religion, but alſo departed from the Example of a moſt juſt Saviour. Vol. I.

The Meekneſs and mild Diſpoſition of our Lord, his Patience under Sufferings, and readineſs to forgive the greateſt Injuries, were no leſs Exemplary. His meekneſs and patience were foretold by the Prophets, *He ſhall not ſtrive nor cry, neither ſhall any man hear his voice in the ſtreets.* (*Eſai.* XLII.) *Tell ye the daughter of Sion; Behold, the King cometh unto thee meek, and ſitting upon an Aſſe.* (*Iſa.* LXII.) *He was oppreſſed, he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: He is brought as a Lamb to the ſlaughter; and as ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo opened he not his mouth,* (*Eſai.* LIII. 7.) How exactly all theſe Propheſies were fulfilled in his Perſon, the whole Hiſtory of the Goſpel manifeſts. He might, if he had ſo pleaſed, come

Vol. 1. come attended with numerous Guards, and a powerful Retinue, which might have ſecured his Honour from Contempt and Scorn, and ſtruck Terrour into his Enemies, yet he condeſcended to appear in a meek and humble Condition; rather as *the Lamb of God*, than as *the Lion of the Tribe of Judah*. In the Execution of his Office, he was frequently oppoſed by the unreaſonable unbelief of ſome, and obſtinate Perverſeneſs of others. And not only ſo, but deſpiſed, reviled, and ſlandered; provoked with the moſt outrageous Injuries; and betrayed by his own Friends and Creatures. All theſe Affronts he might eaſily have revenged with the breath of his Mouth, and returned upon his Adverſaries their deſerved Puniſhment, by a ſingle Demonſtration of his Almighty Power: But he quietly endured the higheſt *Contradiction of ſinners, and poſſeſſed his ſoul in Patience.*

With what Goodneſs, and affectionate Terms did he urge the Practice of his Precepts to Mankind? Theſe he might have impoſed on us, as his Servants and Vaſſals. He might have delivered them, as God did the Law at Mount *Sinai*, with Thunder and Lightning, and given

given no other reaſon than his own Authority; but he choſe rather to urge them in a ſweet and familiar manner, and conjure Mankind by their own Good, by the hopes of Happineſs, and by the remembrance of his Benefits to the obſervance of them. With what Calmneſs and Serenity did he treat his moſt inveterate Enemies; and not deny to the Traitour *Judas*, even in the very Act of his Treaſon, the endearing Compellation of *Friend?* But then if we view the Circumſtances of his Paſſion, with what courage and compoſure of Mind he underwent thoſe terrible Sufferings; with what Meekneſs he bore the Inſults and Scoffs of his Enemies; how *when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he ſuffered, he threatned not, but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly:* If we conſider the Tranquility of his Soul in all theſe things, and the unparallel'd Exceſs of his Mercy, in praying for his Perſecutors, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do:* We muſt conclude, the whole to have been a moſt amazing inſtance of Meekneſs and Patience. Vol. 1.

Such was the Example of our Saviour,

Vol. 1. our, which fully expreſſed the force and meaning of his many Precepts and Exhortations relating to this Matter. No Duty is more frequently, and more largely urged by him, than this of forgiving Injuries, and overcoming Revenge: That we ſhould treat our Adverſaries ſweetly, and without Paſſion; that we ſhould win them by kindneſs to an acknowledgement of their Fault, and then freely forgive it to them; or if they cannot by Mildneſs be obliged to Repentance, yet at leaſt to baniſh all thoughts and revenge of anger.

Not that the Religion of Chriſt forbids Men to uſe all lawful Defences, or invoke the aſſiſtance of the Civil Magiſtrate, againſt Injuries and Violences offered to them; when impunity may encourage wicked Men to a greater Boldneſs, and tend to the loſs of private Perſons, or the diſadvantage of the publick. Chriſtianity preſerves intire all the priviledges of Nature, and derogates not in the leaſt from the Rules of Juſtice; but forbids Men to be tranſported by Paſſion againſt their Adverſaries, and not to ſeek revenge for revenge ſake; that is, it does not forbid to repair the loſs of this Injury, or prevent the

the like Injuſtice to himſelf, or others for the future; but to return the Injury, and gratifie his anger, in creating a like Inconvenience to his Adverſary, or maintaining an inward Hatred to him. Vol. 1.

And herein the Spirit of Chriſtianity moſt eminently diſcovers it ſelf. For to preſerve the common Rights of Juſtice is no extraordinary matter, for a revealed Religion to perform. This the Dictates of Nature, the Senſe of our own temporal Intereſt, and the Rules of civil Society, may effect. But to conquer thoſe violent Paſſions of Hatred, Anger and deſire of Revenge; to retain a quiet and undiſturbed Mind amidſt provoking Injuries and Affronts; to entertain the inſults of an Enemy, rather with Pity than Reſentment, and manifeſt how little we were affected with them by a conſtant readineſs to forgive them: Theſe are the proper Characters, and moſt certain Marks of a Soul filled with the Love of God, and plac't above the reach of humane things: which hath an intire Command of the inferiour Faculties of the Body, and doth in earneſt purſue the ends of a Divine Religion. Theſe chiefly rendred the Life of Chriſt admirable and extraordinary;

Vol. 1. dinary; and will make us the not unworthy Diſciples of ſo great a Maſter.

Laſtly, the Charity of our Lord was correſpondent to all the other perfections of his Mind, that is, moſt intenſe, and of the higheſt degree. Indeed this ſeems to have been the darling Vertue of the Bleſſed Jeſus, which he ſtudiouſly cultivated above all others; to promote which all his deſigns did in ſome meaſure tend, and his Example moſt directly lead. All the Actions of his Life were almoſt ſo many Demonſtrations of his Love to Mankind. Even his Miracles, which were primarily wrought to teſtifie his Divine Power, bore eminent Characters of this Loving kindneſs, being employed in healing the Diſeaſes, and ſupplying the wants of Men; upon account of which the Apoſtle ſaith, That *he went about doing good*; and even his Enemies were forced to confeſs, (*Mark* VII. 37.) *He hath done all things well; he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to ſpeak.*

But the higheſt Teſtimony of the Charity of our Saviour, was his ineſtimable Love in the Redemption of Mankind, his deſcent from Heaven, ignominious Life upon Earth, and at laſt moſt

most painful Death upon the Cross, to rescue his own Creatures, who had rebelled against him, from the Power of Satan, and the consequences of their own sins. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.* (1 *John* III. 16.) *And greater love than this hath no man.* A Love so stupendious, that it no less confounds the Apprehension, than exceeds the imitation of finite Men. To this the highest Expressions of our Charity are but faint attempts and imperfect shadows. A perfect imitation of it is beyond our Capacity, and therefore not required: but whatsoever is possible to us, can be but a mean return to so vast an Obligation. St. *John* therefore makes this easie and natural inference from it, *Beloved if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* (1 *John* IV. 11.) If our Creator loved us his Creatures, who had nothing in us worthy his Love, but had many ways offended and deserved his extreme Displeasure; if he loved us to so wonderful a degree; surely we ought to love our Fellow Creatures, who have in them no less excellent Perfections than our Selves, with all possible affection; which, how- Vol. 1.

Vol. I. ever to the utmoſt of our power, is yet infinitely beneath the Love, wherewith he loved us. Eſpecially ſince our Saviour chiefly impoſed this Condition on us, in return of his infinite Kindneſs, and that alſo in reſpect to his own Example, (*John* XIII. 34, 35.) *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye alſo love one another. By this ſhall all men know, that ye are my diſciples, if ye love one another.*

So that in this conſiſteth the very Life of Chriſtianity; without this no man can pretend to be the Diſciple of our Lord. By this in the Apoſtolick times Chriſtians were eminently diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the world; when they devoted all their Poſſeſſions to the Offices of Charity, and *had all things common.* An exceſs of Charity, which however no longer Practicable, than while the number of Diſciples continued to be ſmall, and was therefore laid aſide, when the Church became numerous, as being neither neceſſary, nor convenient, nor even poſſible; yet clearly ſhews what was the primitive Genius of Chriſtianity; how exactly they followed the Footſtepts of their Bleſſed

Bleſſed Maſter, and with what fervour of Charity they were indued. A fervour which expired not with the diſuſe of that Apoſtolick Cuſtom of ſharing their Poſſeſſions in common; but continued to exert it ſelf for ſome Ages after in all poſſible Demonſtrations of a real Charity: Inſomuch, that the Heathens uſed to cry out in admiration, *See how theſe Galileans love one another!* If then we be unwilling to be accuſed of having diſobeyed the great Commandment of our Saviour, forſaken his Example, and intirely loſt the genuine Spirit of Chriſtianity; we muſt retrieve that admirable Charity, which was by him ſo mightily enjoyned, practiſed, and bequeathed to his Diſciples. Vol. I.

Thus I have conſidered the Example of our Lord, in ſome of the greater lines and ſtrokes of it; and ſhewn it to have been in all reſpects the moſt excellent, which could poſſibly be propoſed to Mankind. It remains, that I urge the imitation of it in ſome few words.

Firſt then, the imitation of this Divine Example is the Duty of every Chriſtian, conſidered in the Notion of a Diſciple; which includes not only an Obli-

Vol. 1. gation of yielding an intire Obedience to the commands of Chriſt, but alſo of following his Example as near as poſſible, and that in the firſt place. To aſſent to and obey the Divine Precepts, is properly the Notion of a Believer; but of a Diſciple to imitate the Actions and Conduct of his Maſter. And therefore the Patriarchs and Jews might well be called Believers in God, but not the Diſciples of God. Precepts only were given to them, the Divine Example was not propoſed as a Rule unto them. The Apoſtles of our Lord are alſo by way of eminence called his Diſciples: Becauſe they were the conſtant Witneſſes and Attendants of his Life, who did partake of the ſame manner of living, and were ſuppoſed to be his Companions, as well in moral as natural Actions. Although this Title is not ſo far appropriated to them, as to be denied to us; if we take the ſame care to follow the Example of our Lord and Maſter, as they did. We may follow it, though at a diſtance; we may purſue it, though we cannot attain to it. And that we may do it, thoſe firſt and chief Diſciples have enabled us, by giving us large Accounts

of

of the Actions and life of our Saviour, Vol. 1.
in the Holy Gospels. Himself tell us, (*John* XV. 8.) *If ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my Disciples*; and then *Ver.* 10. explains their bearing much Fruit, by imitating his obedience to the Divine Commands. *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Fathers commandments, and abide in his love.* So that if we desire to retain the name of a Disciple, and thereby preserve our Relation to Christ; we must perform the Duty of a Disciple, by religiously following the Example of our Lord and Master.

But then in the next place, to imitate the Life and Actions of our Saviour, is not only our Duty, but our Happiness. We may be sure, that while the Blessed Jesus lived on Earth, he pursued the true ends of Happiness, and cultivated those Vertues, which were most conducive to the perfection of his Nature, and the Dignity of his Office. What Honour then must it needs be to us mortal Men, to be made like unto the Son of God, in the Practice of the same Vertues, in pursuing the same Methods of Happiness, and in an intire Conformity of Actions? It was the highest Ambi-

Vol. 1. tion of the more generous among the Heathens to imitate the Lives of their antient Heroes, and be thought like unto them: And ſhall not we ardently deſire to reſemble our moſt Bleſſed Redeemer, by a ſimilitude of Holineſs and Vertue? Their Ambition was miſplac't, and therefore the occaſion of their Unhappineſs; ours is directed to the right Object, and therefore cannot be too great.

It muſt needs be an infinite Satisfaction to every pious Soul, to be employed about the ſame Duties, wherein the Bleſſed Jeſus ſpent his Life; to exerciſe the ſame Offices of Piety, Charity and Devotion; to be inſpired with the ſame Principles of Humility, Meekneſs and Patience. This Conſideration will diſpel all wearineſs, will add Vigour to our Souls, and remove the fear of all temporal Evils, which may attend the performance of our Duty. This will ſupport us under all outward Calamities; alleviate our Sorrows, and calm our Tempeſts; to remember, That our Lord endured the ſame Afflictions upon the ſame account. If he was content to undergo the Malice of men and fury of Devils; ſhall

we

we hope to be exempted from the Attempts of the ſame Enemies? *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.* (*John* XV. 18.) And ſhall we refuſe to undergo the ſame Fortunes with our Lord and Maſter? No ſurely. Only let us take care, that the Hatred and Perſecution of Men be brought upon us for no other Cauſe, than they were on him; that is, not through any fault of ours, but only for the ſake of God, and our obedience to his Commands: So ſhall we imitate him, as well in the moſt happy tranquility of Mind under all Afflictions, as in the Afflictions themſelves, and the Cauſes of them. Vol. I.

Laſtly, The conſtant imitation of our Lords Example, will be our Comfort and Satisfaction in the whole courſe of our Lives; which will remove all Doubts and Difficulties, and give us the beſt aſſurance, that we have performed the whole Duty of Man. If only Precepts of a good Life had been given to us, we might have been daily diſtracted with Doubts and Scruples concerning the meaning, extent, and Application of them, they might have been perverted by the errour and craft of

Vol. 1. of Men, and rendred uſeleſs by falſe Gloſſes and Interpretations; whereas the Example of our Saviour hath taken away all theſe Scruples, and placed every Precept in its full light. If we truly imitate his Example, we are infallibly aſſured, That we have in all things done our Duty; even as he performed the whole Will of God, and more than once obtained that Teſtimony from Heaven. *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed.* So much greater aſſurance may we have, by following his Example, than by reſpecting his Precepts only.

And therefore St. *Paul* after ſo many Rules and Precepts given to his Converts; ſtill adviſeth them to be Followers of him; but then no farther, than he followed Chriſt. *Be ye followers of me, even as I alſo am of Chriſt.* (1. *Cor.* XI. 1.) By this alſo we ſhall be inabled to give a ſatisfactory Reaſon of all our Actions, and put to ſilence the Gainſaying of fooliſh Men, without the aſſiſtance of any profound knowledge, or deep Speculation. If they deride our Chriſtian Vertues, and ſcoffe at the Duties of Humility, Self-denial and Mortification; it will be ſufficient to anſwer, That

That in practiſing them, we imitate the Example of the Son of God, the eternal Wiſdom of the Father. Let them pleaſe themſelves with their Mirth, and falſe ſuppoſal of a more refined knowledge. We follow an infallible Guide and Pattern; who, if he hath not placed the Wiſdom of his Precepts in ſo clear a light, as the Sun in Heaven, hath at leaſt recommended them by his Practice, and can aſſert them by his Power. Vol. I.

Such are the Obligations of all Chriſtians, to imitate the Example of their Saviour; and ſuch are the Benefits which reſult from it. Let us by an earneſt endeavour to follow this moſt excellent Example, fulfil the Obligations, and obtain the Benefits, that as we have been on earth made like unto him in Vertue and Holineſs; ſo we may hereafter in Heaven be made yet more like unto him in Glory and Immortality.

The Third SERMON.

PREACH'D

October, 1688.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

1 Pet. III. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

THE most Wise God hath so contrived that most Holy and excellent Religion, which he intended as the most perfect, and ultimate Revelation of his Will to the World; that it tendeth equally to manifest his own infinite Wisdom and Goodness, and to procure the Salvation of Mankind. His Wisdom appeareth in the Excellency and Simplicity of those Rules which

which it propoſeth; in its immediate tendency to beget and eſtabliſh due Notions and Apprehenſions of the Deity; in the reaſonableneſs of its Conſtitution, and admirable Congruity to the nature of Mankind. His Goodneſs is conſpicuous, not only in thoſe infinite Rewards, which he hath affixed to the performance of it; in the Free Pardon of rebellious Sinners, and liberal diſtribution of his Graces; but, which more directly comes under our preſent Conſideration, in adapting that Religion, which he intended for the benefit of all, to the Capacity of all; and thereby rendring it no leſs eaſie than advantageous. Vol. I.

And in this the Chriſtian Religion infinitely exceeds all other Syſtems of Religion, whether true or falſe. Among the Heathens many great and learned Perſons had imployed their Wits in refining the Superſtitions of their Countrey; and aſſigning Reaſons for that way of Worſhip, which obtained among them. But their Notions were abſtruſe and myſtical, their Conceptions dark and unaccountable, above the underſtanding and capacity of the common People, fitted only for the

Vol. I. the Contemplation of Philoſophers; and after all, no other than the products of a volatile Fancy: So little adapted to the underſtanding of the vulgar, or indeed intended for their benefit; that they were ſtudiouſly concealed under the venerable Name of *Myſteries*, and imparted only to Confidents.

Among the Jews all imaginable Care was taken to inſtruct the People in all neceſſary Duties relating to God, Themſelves, and their Neighbours: But even the more Learned of them knew not the Reaſons of thoſe many Ceremonies and Legal Obſervations impoſed on them. They knew in general, that many of them typified the coming of a future Meſſias, who ſhould inſtitute a more excellent Religion, and be the Author of ſignal Benefits to their Nation. But alas, this knowledge was lame and imperfect in its own Nature: and infinitely unſatisfactory to them; who deſired to know ſomewhat more certain, yet ſtill continued to wander in the dark without any certain guide.

This appears from the Writings of thoſe Learned Jews, who lived about the time of our Saviour's coming. Theſe employed their Labours in finding out the

the hidden meaning of the Moſaick Law, and diſcovering the Reaſons of all thoſe Ceremonial Inſtitutions; but ſo unſucceſsfully, that they plainly miſtook the deſign of their Divine Lawgiver, and by turning all his Ritual Precepts into Allegories and obſcure Myſteries, defeated their Inſtitution, and corrupted the truth of their Religion, with falſe Notions and Interpretations. And no wonder indeed: for the veil was not yet taken from them, nor to be removed, but by the coming of the Meſſias, who was to be *the Son of Righteouſneſs*, diſperſing the dark Clouds of ignorance, and giving light unto the World. He alone hath made a full Diſcovery of the Will of God, rendred the knowledge of it eaſie to all, and thereby made the Ignorance of neceſſary Truths to be inexcuſable: herein compleating the Covenant, which God made with the Houſe of *Iſrael* in the Prophet *Jeremy*, XXXI. 33, 34. *After thoſe days ſaith the Lord, I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. And they ſhall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, ſaying, know the Lord. For they ſhall all know me from the leaſt of them unto the greateſt of them, ſaith the Lord.* Vol. I.

Yet

Vol. I. Yet must we not imagine, that in propoſing this plain and eaſie Religion, God intended to ſupercede all Labours of Mankind, and imprint the knowledge of it even violently upon our Minds. He hath dealt with us as rational Creatures, propoſed the truth clearly to us, enforced it with the moſt perſwaſive Arguments, fitted it to our Capacity, and afforded us eaſie means of obtaining a perfect knowledge of it. After ſuch abundant Proviſion for the free Entertainment of it in our Minds, he leaves it to the Liberty of our Will, whether we will embrace or reject it. To deal otherwiſe with us were to ſuppoſe us meer Brutes and Machines, not capable of entertaining any Religion, and unfit to receive either Rewards or Puniſhments.

It was not only the Precept of our Saviour, but the Wiſdom of all Ages, *Not to caſt holy things before Dogs, nor Pearls before Swine*; to create a knowledge of Divine Truths in perſons inſenſible of the Benefit conferred upon Mankind in the Revelation of them, and who make no advancement towards their Reception. The divine Wiſdom hath choſen to propoſe thoſe eternal Truths

Truths in ſuch a method, as that a perfect Acquiſition of the knowledge of them might exerciſe the diligence and obedience of Mankind. We muſt bring Minds freed from all Prejudices and Paſſions, uſe due attention, ſearch the Scriptures, weigh the Reaſons and Arguments which perſwade their Divinity, and being once convinced of that, acquieſce in them; and in a word, uſe all means which God hath abundantly provided for our Inſtruction. We muſt not ſatisfie our ſelves with an Hiſtorical knowledge, but inquire into the Reaſons of the Divine Oeconomy, reflect upon the reaſonableneſs of it, and make it the Subject of our Meditations. A Subject than which none can be more worthy the Dignity of our Nature, or more neceſſary to the being of a Chriſtian. By this we ſhall be convinced, That the performance of all Chriſtian Duties, is not only enforced by the revealed Will of God, but alſo commanded by the Law of Nature; that the conſtant Practice of them is our greateſt Perfection, and would be our utmoſt Happineſs, although attended with no Rewards. Every increaſe of knowledge will augment the force of Vol. I.

Vol. 1. our Obligation, and bring ſome perſwaſive Argument to the Exerciſe of our Duty.

But then, if we conſider, what the Revelation of Chriſtianity hath added to thoſe imperfect Diſcoveries made by the light of Nature; the Myſteries of our Redemption; the Sacrifice of the Croſs; the Free Pardon of our ſins; the hopes of eternal Life; and thoſe Fœderal Rites, the Sacraments, by which we are intitled to theſe Benefits; we ſhall be able more perfectly to comprehend the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, and the Greatneſs of our Obligation to him. Theſe advantages naturally flow from a perfect knowledge of our Faith.

However the Apoſtle, in giving this Precept, more immediately reſpects the Conviction of thoſe Perſons, who ſpoke evil of the Chriſtians, as of evil doers, as appears from the following Verſe. For when Chriſtianity firſt appeared in the World, teaching the Worſhip of one only God, and our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, *Commanding all men every where to repent*, and enjoyning them upon the ſevereſt Penalties *to live godlily, holily and righteouſly in this preſent world*;

world; Men decried it as leading to Atheism, and the Extirpation of Divine Worship; becauſe forbidding any Worſhip to be given to thoſe falſe Gods, who were the univerſal Objects of Adoration at that time, and changing all pompous external Ceremonies into a ſpiritual and internal Worſhip. They traduced it as irrational, and debaſing the Dignity of Mankind; becauſe not propoſed with the uſual Oſtentation of worldly Wiſdom and Philoſophy, and requiring men to deny their Luſts, conquer their Deſires, and forſake their moſt darling Paſſions. Laſtly, they rejected it as impious and execrable, as an unheard of Superſtition, and a fond Credulity; becauſe they knew not thoſe Arguments upon which it was founded; nor conſidered the demonſtrative Proofs, which recommended it. To convince the Folly and Ignorance of theſe men, the Apoſtle requires all Chriſtians *to be ready always to give an anſwer to every man of the reaſon of the hope that is in them, that ſo whereas they ſpeak of them as evil doers*; they may be convinced, that neither the Doctrine of Chriſtians leads to Immortality, nor their Practice favours it.

Vol. 1. For the knowledge of Chriſtianity was not intended to be a Speculative Science, meerly to inform the Judgment, and not Correct our Errours: But as an operative knowledge, which might viſibly exert it ſelf in all our Duties to God and Man. The Divinity of Heathen Philoſophers tended to no other End, than to foment their Pride, and create in them a vain Opinion of their own Wiſdom and Merits. They referred it not to God, nor employed it as a Principle of obedience to him. It abated not their Paſſions, reformed not their Luſts, and had no viſible influence upon their Lives, ſave in making them haughty and ſupercilious, the conſtant Character of thoſe Philoſophers.

In oppoſition to this the Apoſtle Wills, that we expreſs the Divinity of our Religion in the Holineſs of our Lives, that we be not puft up with Pride, nor imagine it to be the product either of our own merit or underſtanding; that we acknowledge to have received it from God, and profeſs that we expect either to be ſaved or damned by our obedience to the Rules of it; that we perpetually maintain an awful

awful regard of the Commands of our Almighty Lawgiver, and ſet our ſelves to the performance of them, with the moſt profound Humility and Submiſſion; that we be not affrighted from the profeſſion of our Faith by the greateſt threats or Terrours; nor be betrayed to the Omiſſion of our Duty by ſupine Negligence and want of Conſideration. But this in a word, *That we be ready always to give an anſwer to every man, that asketh us, a reaſon of the hope that is in us, with meekneſs and fear.* In Diſcourſing of theſe words, I ſhall inſiſt upon theſe two Heads, which naturally offer themſelves to our Conſideration. Vol. 1.

I. That the Chriſtian Religion is agreeable to the Principles of Reaſon, and carrieth ſufficient Evidence along with it.

II. That it is the Duty of every Chriſtian, not wanting the means of ſufficient Inſtruction, to enable himſelf to give a Reaſon of his Faith.

I. That the Chriſtian Religion, *&c.* For the Apoſtle commanding us, *To be always ready to give a reaſon of the hope that is in us*, plainly intimates, that a Reaſon may be given of it. For that

Vol. I. by this term *of the hope that is in us*, is to be underſtood the whole Syſtem of our Faith, appears, as well from the Context, as from the frequent Acceptation of thoſe words in the ſame Senſe in divers places of the New Teſtament. This Religion, as it carrieth eminent Marks of its Divinity on many other Accounts, ſo chiefly in the reaſonableneſs, and evidence of it; and that either,

1. In reſpect of the Nature of it, and the Rules preſcribed by it: Or,

2. In reſpect of the undoubted certainty of its having been revealed by God.

I. If we reſpect the Nature and Conſtitution of the Chriſtian Religion, and the Rules of Life and Worſhip propoſed by it, we ſhall find it exactly rational, and attended with the greateſt Evidence. This might be proved by many Conſiderations: But at preſent I ſhall inſiſt on no more than two. As,

1. Chriſtianity propoſeth a Divine Worſhip moſt conſentaneous to the Nature of God, and tendeth moſt effectually to ſecure his Honour among men. The Primary end of all Religion is the Worſhip of God, and is intended either

ther to pay to God that tribute of A- Vol. 1.
doration and Thanks, which his infinite Majeſty, and right of Creation, Redemption, and other benefits require; or to implore his Favour in pardoning our ſins, ſupplying our Neceſſities, or conferring his Graces on us.

All theſe Actions ought to be directed in that way which is moſt ſutable to his Nature, and may beſt expreſs the perfection of it. *God is a Spirit*, and therefore requireth to be *worſhipped in ſpirit and truth*. Our Soul alone is truly capable of Religion, can alone entertain the Idea of God, and form an Act of Worſhip. All outward Ceremonies, and corporeal Modes of Worſhip are no otherwiſe Holy, or to be accounted of, than as they tend to ſhew the inward Devotion of the Soul; which is wont to declare its Thoughts and Motions, when vehement and intenſe, by external Indications. All other voluntary external Acts of Worſhip, which are not the natural Effects and Signs of an inward Zeal and warmth of Devotion, ſerve only to gratifie a fooliſh Superſtition, and relate no more to the Worſhip of God, than any other irregular Motions of the Body.

Vol. I. If we really imploy the Faculties of our Soul, as we ought to do, in admiring the perfections of the Divine Nature, in adoring his Majesty, loving his Goodness, and fearing his Justice; these affections of the Mind will naturally discover themselves in outward Acts and Gestures, and cannot be suppressed. These external Actions declare to others the inward Sense of our Minds, and thereby tend to manifest the Honour of God, and publish his Glory; but deserve no otherwise to be regarded either by God or Man, than as they are the Signs and Effects of an inward Piety.

And hence we may judge of the Excellency of our Religion, without considering the Evidence of its Revelation. If it be chiefly employed in external Shews and Ceremonies, and makes the performance of them, without any inward Motion of the Soul, an Act of Worship; if it represents the Divine Attributes and Perfections by corporeal Symbols, rather than noble Conceptions of the Soul; and desires God to accept of that mean and imperfect Service, instead of a near Conformity to himself, by the Exercise of Holiness and Vertue:

Vertue: Such a Religion may perhaps be true, but neither agreeable to the Excellency of God; nor anſwering to the Dignity of our own Nature. God may accept it, or even Command it for a time, in Compaſſion to the Blindneſs and infirmity of Mankind, not capable under ſome Circumſtances, of a more noble and ſpiritual Religion; but could never intend to continue it any longer, than till he ſhould pleaſe to make a more full and open Revelation of himſelf. Vol. I.

And this was the Caſe of the Jewiſh Religion. For the Heathens deſerve not here to be conſidered, among whom religious Worſhip conſiſted wholly in external Rites and Actions, and thoſe oft-times, ſuch as were in their own Nature unlawful. The Religion of the Jews however inſtituted by God, was chiefly employed in outward Rites and Obſervances, in Waſhings and Abſtinence from certain Meats, in Obſervation of times, and tedious Ceremonies; which although they ſerved to typifie the coming of the Meſſias, and with him the Revelation of a more perfect Religion; Yet did not directly ſignifie any inward Acts of Reverence, Piety or Devotion, nor were neceſſarily accompanied

Vol. 1. companied by them. The perpetual offering of carnal Sacrifices alone argued the imperfection of their Worſhip: Since therein the Sacrificers deſired of God to accept the Lives of Beaſts, inſtead of a more holy and reaſonable Sacrifice, the devoting their own Wills and Affections to his Service.

'Tis the peculiar Honour of the Chriſtian Religion to worſhip God in a manner agreeable to the ſimplicity of his Nature, *in Spirit and Truth.* In this the Affections of the Soul are alone reſpected; no Ceremonial Obſervances impoſed on us, nor indeed any external Acts of Worſhip; ſave only thoſe Fœderal Rites, I mean the two Sacraments of Baptiſm and the Euchariſt; whereby we are initiated, and enter into Covenant with God, profeſs our belief of it, and adherence to it, intitle our Selves to the Benefits of it, and continue to receive the influence of the Divine Grace. Such Fœderal Rites are abſolutely neceſſary to all inſtituted and revealed Religions; and ſo little derogate from the ſpiritual Nature of our Worſhip, that they were intended on purpoſe to oblige us to it.

Thus the Chriſtian Religion propoſeth

ſeth a Divine Worſhip moſt agreeable to the Nature of God; and not only that, but alſo moſt effectually ſecures his Honour and Majeſty. For it ſeems to have been the Principal deſign of Chriſtianity to root Idolatry out of the world, and introduce the ſole Worſhip of the true God. And how admirably it was fitted for this purpoſe appears as well from the Precepts, as the Conſtitution of it, which hath provided moſt excellent Remedies for thoſe prejudices and imperfections of Mankind, which, before the coming of Chriſt, betrayed it to an univerſal Idolatry. Vol. I.

The two great Motives and Cauſes of Idolatry ſeem to have been, Firſt, That men inured to ſenſual and corporeal Objects, either loſt all Notions of an immaterial God, and then betook themſelves to the worſhip of their fellow Creatures; or retaining the knowledge of the true God, deſired to worſhip him by ſome viſible Repreſentations, which might ſtrike their Senſes.

Or Secondly, that from a Senſe of their ſins, and having deſerved the Divine Diſpleaſure, they formed to themſelves the Notion of an inexorable Deity, who

Vol. 1. who would not receive any Prayers from the polluted hands; nor be intreated any otherwiſe, than as earthly Princes, by the Mediation of Friends and Favourites. Hence they ſet up innumerable Interceſſours with God, either Angels, whom they termed Demons; or the Souls of departed Heroes, whom they imagined dear to God; ſolicited their Mediation, directed their Prayers unto them, and by them tranſmitted them to the Supreme God.

Theſe Prejudices and falſe perſwaſions laid the Foundation of Idolatry in all Ages, and are excellently provided for in the Chriſtian Religion; wherein God forbidding us to worſhip him by any corporeal Repreſentations upon Earth, hath inveſted his own Son, *The brightneſs of his Glory, and expreſs image of his Perſon*, with our Fleſh, and commanded us through him to worſhip himſelf. And then to cure the Fondneſs of Mankind, deſiring to addreſs themſelves to God by Interceſſours, he hath conſtituted him our only Interceſſour, and promiſed to hear our Prayers directed to him in his Name and through his Merits, and at his Mediation to be propitious to us.

Thus

Thus the wise Constitution of Christianity hath most admirably secured the Honour of God; and indeed most successfully. For hereby Idolatry was rooted out, the constant Worship of one only God introduced, and while the Church continued uncorrupted, preserved inviolate. Vol. I.

In the antient Church not the least resemblance of Idolatry could be discovered: the very Heathen Philosophers were forced to confess their Worship to be purely spiritual, and most worthy the Nature of God. No Images were used by them, nor any Prayers offered up but by the alone Mediation of Jesus Christ. It was the ignorance and unhappiness of latter Ages, which admitted corporeal Representations of God, and set up new Intercessours in the Court of Heaven, Saints and Angels, who might receive and manage their Requests.

That so palpable a Corruption of the Christian Religion, which intirely defeats the great Ends and Designs of it before mentioned, should be still defended as lawful, and continued in any part of the Church after so manifest Conviction of the unlawfulness of it, may

Vol. I. may juſtly be admired: But the maintenance of their pretence to Infallibility hath enforced them to do this, which nothing but the defence of a deſperate Cauſe could perſwade Men to do.

It is our Happineſs to be Members of a Church, wherein no ſuch Corruptions are practiſed, nor any Acts of Worſhip taught, which are not, even by the Confeſſion of our Adverſaries, undoubtedly lawful. And it will be our Condemnation, if after ſo plain Conviction, we depart from a rational and truly Divine Worſhip to embrace one corrupted with ſo groſs a Superſtition, which if it be not downright Idolatry, hath at leaſt all the reſemblance of it.

Secondly, Chriſtianity doth not only direct the natural religious Inclination of Man into the right Channel, the Worſhip of the true and only God; but alſo promoteth the real perfection of Man, by preſcribing to him the moſt excellent Rules of Life and Conduct. Which is no ſmall Argument of the Divinity of it, in that it beareth ſo manifeſt reſemblance of the perfect Holineſs of God.

And indeed what can be imagined more

more Excellent and Holy, more conducing to Piety, Justice and Temperance, than the Rules and Precepts of the Christian Religion: So admirably fitted to the Nature of Man, that it would be his Happiness to Practice them, although enforced with no Command, nor crowned with any Reward? For what can be more worthy a rational Soul, than to entertain noble and reverent Conceptions of its Creatour; to express an unlimited Devotion and Gratitude to him by all imaginable Actions of Respect and Honour; to subdue our carnal Affections to the Government of Reason, conquer our Lusts, and trample under foot all Considerations of Interest and Prosperity, when standing in Competition with Vertue and Holiness; to maintain an exact Justice to all Mankind, seek the good of others, and delight in Acts of Charity? Vol. I.

Such a Conduct of Life even the more wise of the antient Heathens, directed by the Light of Reason, esteemed the utmost degree of humane Perfection, and believed those Persons, who possess it, already enstated in the Supreme Happiness. And that they might manifest themselves fully convinced of the truth

Vol. 1. truth of this Opinion, there were not wanting ſome generous Souls, who choſe to forego all temporal Conveniences, and even Life it ſelf, rather than violate any part of their Duty.

And is not the Exerciſe of all the aforementioned Vertues, the very deſign of Chriſtianity? Are not thoſe the very Precepts of our Religion? With this only difference, that we are taught to practice them in a more eminent and perfect manner, and to refer all to God, performing them from a Principle of Love to him, and Obedience to his Commands. Our Saviour hath obliged us to guard our thoughts with the ſame Care and Vigilance, with which we do our outward Actions, and poſſeſs thoſe Vertues in our Soul, which others are content to do in appearance.

The Jewiſh Religion required no more than the performance of the ſeveral Rites and Obſervances of the Law: And whatſoever performed them, although without any inward Senſe of Piety, *Had fulfilled all legal righteouſneſs, and was no longer a debter to the law.* But the Evangelical righteouſneſs Soars higher; and ſcorning to ſtoop at ſuch *mean and beggerly Elements*, primarily reſpects

respects to the Affections of the heart. A manifest Argument that the Author of it was a Divine Person, and could discover the most secret Recesses of the Soul; otherwise it would be vain and trifling to found Piety and Religion in the internal Acts of the Mind, and appropriate either Rewards or Punishments to them only. Vol. 1.

Again Christianity directeth all our Actions to their natural end, the Supreme Good, the Enjoyment of God, and Obedience to him. It is but too apparent, and hath been plainly confessed by many of them, that all the refined Morality of the Heathen Philosophers was founded upon a Principle of Vanity, and directed rather to the Acquisition of Praise and Glory, than the discharge of their Duty to God, Themselves and their Neighbours. Whereas the Christian Faith directs us to perform all in obedience to the Divine Laws, to ascribe all our good Deeds to God the Author and Fountain of them, and preserve an awful Sense of our own unworthiness in respect of the Divine Majesty and Goodness. Hereby it addeth to all other excellent Perfections, and Crowns them with Humility; a Ver-

Vol. 1. tue almoſt unknown to any other Syſtem of Religion, yet naturally ariſing from the Principles of Chriſtianity.

Laſtly, This Religion is moſt pure and ſimple, equally adapted to all Orders and Ranks of men, and thereby may juſtly be accounted moſt agreeable to their Nature, ſince it equally concerneth and includeth all. The Precepts of it are plain and eaſie, laying level with the meaneſt Capacity, and placed beyond the Power of none; ſuch as carry their Conviction along with them, and need no other Argument, than to be propoſed. The Principles and Myſteries of it are perſpicuous and ſignificant, ſuch as may create a right Senſe and eſteem of the Divine Attributes, and afford powerful Arguments to Men of manifeſting their obedience to God. In a word, nothing can be found, or diſcovered in it unworthy of God, or not agreeable to Men; nothing which doth not proclaim it ſelf owing to a Divine Original. Which brings me to the ſecond Conſideration: Namely,

II. That the Chriſtian Religion is rational and evident, in reſpect of the undoubted certainty of its having been revealed by God. To evince this we have

have already made no inconſiderable advance in ſhewing it to be moſt worthy of God, and fitted to the Nature and Neceſſity of Mankind. For hereby all Objections, which can be formed againſt it, are prevented, and the Proofs of its Revelation left in their full force. Whereas no one Syſtem of falſe Religion hath ever obtained in the World, which hath not taught ſomewhat contrary to Reaſon, and upon that account ought to have been rejected, without inquiring into the truth of thoſe Proofs and Arguments, whereby it pretended to Revelation. Vol. I.

The falſeneſs of the Pagan Religion diſcovered it ſelf, in propoſing the Worſhip of many Gods; in giving extravagant and undecent Notions of them, repreſenting them as Murderers, Adulterers, and Criminals of the like Nature; in practiſing Childiſh and oft-times brutiſh Superſtitions, and confining all Religion to external Worſhip. To come to our own Times, the falſeneſs of the Mahometan Religion appears, in the moſt abſurd and extravagant Fables, which it relates of God, unworthy the petulancy of an Infant, much more the Majeſty of an all-wiſe

Vol. 1. Being; But chiefly, in placing the Supreme and eternal Happineſs of Man, after this Life, in an open Violation of the Laws of Nature; by the continual Practice of unbridled Luſts, and indulging a brutiſh Appetite in all ſenſual Pleaſures. I will not add to theſe a corrupt part of the Chriſtian Church, which teacheth Doctrines contrary both to Senſe and Reaſon. But from the whole we may draw a convincing Argument of an All-wiſe Providence preſiding over the World, and directing all things to the good of Mankind: In that it never ſuffered any falſe Religion to obtain, which did not carry along with it moſt evident Marks of its falſeneſs; and conſequently into which none could enter, but by betraying their Reaſon, and wilfully ſhutting their Eyes upon the Truth.

Hereby the Plea of Ignorance, and involuntary Errour is taken from all. For the exiſtence of One only God may be eaſily diſcovered by the light of Nature. The Laws of Nature are known to all; and the meaneſt Ideots may judge of ſenſible things by their Senſes: So that to fall into any Errours contradicting the light of Nature, or the

the report of our Senſes, may juſtly be accounted wilful and inexcuſable. Thus all erroneous Religions diſcover themſelves by the falſeneſs of their Doctrines; whereas Chriſtianity recommends it ſelf to the Underſtandings of all Men, by the reaſonableneſs and Divinity of its Doctrines. Vol. 1.

To this we may add, that ſome Revealed Religion was plainly neceſſary to Mankind, overwhelmed with an univerſal corruption of Ignorance and Superſtition, and miſerably ſubjected to the Dominion of the Devil and their own Luſts. But as none more excellent Religion than this could be propoſed; ſo none could be founded upon better Proofs. For ſince all Revelation muſt be made at ſome certain time, to ſome certain Perſons, and in ſome certain place: However, it might to them be atteſted, with the greateſt and moſt unconteſtable Miracles; yet the report of it could be conveyed to Perſons diſtant in place and time, no otherwiſe than by the Teſtimony of thoſe, who had been Eye-witneſſes of it; and conſequently to them the Proofs of it could be no other, than the Nature of the thing would admit: Not

Vol. 1. Demonſtrative and excluding all Doubt, but Moral, and excluding all juſt Doubt. No general and univerſal Revelation, ſuch as is Chriſtianity, can be made in any other manner; and therefore to expect any other Proofs of it would be highly unreaſonable; although theſe it poſſeſſeth in the higheſt, and moſt eminent manner; which I proceed in the next place briefly to ſhew.

Miracles are by all acknowledged to be the peculiar effects of God, and to exceed the Power of a finite Being. That wonderful and unaccountable Actions may be and often have been, performed by the ſleight of Men, or concurrence of evil Spirits, muſt be Confeſſed; but theſe fail not to carry ſome Evidence of deceit and impoſture along with them, and may eaſily be diſcerned by judicious and attentive Perſons, from thoſe which proceed from the finger of God, and are the real works of Omnipotence. Now it cannot be imagined, that God will exert his Almighty Power in working Miracles upon ſlight and trivial occaſions, much leſs in Confirmation of a Lye, or any pretended Revelation. If therefore any Prophet appears inveſted with the

Power

Power of Miracles, and we be ſatisfied that the Miracles are true and real, and that his Revelations neither contradict the light of Nature, nor any precedent Revelation, we muſt own his Divine Commiſſion, and ſubmit to his Revelations, which in that Caſe will truly carry along with them a Divine Authority. Vol. 1.

This was the Caſe of *Moſes*, whoſe Miracles were unexceptionable, and his Revelations in no reſpect contrary to Reaſon, nor yet to any precedent Revelation; for no precedent one was yet made. This alſo was the Caſe of our Saviour Chriſt, but in a more eminent manner. His Revelations, far from oppoſing the natural reaſon and ſenſe of Mankind, are moſt perfective of it, as hath been already in ſome meaſure ſhown. Neither are they contrary to any precedent Revelation. For although they tend to aboliſh and deſtroy the Moſaick Inſtitution; This doth not in the leaſt derogate from the truth of it. The Moſaick Law by the very Nature of it was fitted only for the Nonage of Revelation, and to continue no longer than till the times of Reformation ſhould come. But which

Vol. 1. cleareth the matter beyond all doubt, God had expreſsly foretold to the Jews, that he would put an end to their Diſpenſation, and inſtitute a new, and more perfect Covenant. Infinite places to this purpoſe might be alledged out of the Old Teſtament; I ſhall name but one. In the aforementioned paſſage of *Jeremy*, God tells them. *Behold the days come, that I will make a new Covenant with the houſe of Iſrael, and with the houſe of Judah. Not according to the Covenant which I made with their Fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: But this ſhall be the Covenant, which I will make with the houſe of Iſrael.*

The Chriſtian Religion doth not only not contradict the Jewiſh Revelation, but alſo receive infinite Confirmation from it. God by foretelling the coming of the Meſſias with all the Circumſtances of it, had abundantly provided, that when he ſhould come, unleſs a fatal Blindneſs and Stupidity intervened, he ſhould not be rejected by thoſe, for whoſe ſake he came. God had promiſed his coming to our firſt Parents; had aſſured *Abraham*, That *in him all the Nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed*; had revealed

vealed to *Jacob*, That *before the departure of the Scepter from Judah Shiloh ſhould come*; and had declared to the Jews by the mouth of *Moſes*, That *he would raiſe up a Prophet from among them, like unto him whom they ſhould* be bound to *hear in all things*. Vol. I.

But all this is inconſiderable in reſpect of that full and more clear Manifeſtation given by God in after Ages: The moſt Wiſe God chooſing to prefigure him by more expreſs Characters, according as the time of his coming drew more near. In the Pſalms and Prophets, the manner and place of his Birth; the Nature of his Office; the meanneſs of his Condition; the manner and bitterneſs of his Sufferings; the Triumphs of his Reſurrection; in a word, all the Circumſtances of his Life and Death, are ſo plainly pointed out and related, that nothing leſs than a perverſe Blindneſs could doubt of the Perſon deſigned by them. Among the latter Prophets, *Daniel* foretold, that he ſhould come at the end of ſeventy weeks of years; and *Malachi* the laſt of all, that he ſhould come before the Second Temple was deſtroyed, and honour it with his Preſence. So that all the

Vol. 1. the Miracles, which were wrought in Confirmation of the Jewiſh Religion, tend moſt effectually to eſtabliſh the Chriſtian Faith: Not only becauſe all the Characters aſſigned by the Prophets to denote the future Meſſias, met moſt exactly in the Perſon of our Saviour; but becauſe they can meet in no one elſe. For the time prefixed for the Accompliſhment of the Prophecies concerning the Meſſias is plainly expired; and yet no other Perſon hath yet appeared, to whom the Characters of the Meſſias can with any ſhew of Reaſon be applied. So that either the Jewiſh Religion is wholly falſe, or the Chriſtian infallibly true.

Then as for the Miracles of our Saviour, it is impoſſible to imagine any more wonderful in their Operation, more beneficial in their Nature, more Convictive of their Divine Original, or better atteſted than they were. So great and ſtupendious, that they forced even his Adverſaries to confeſs, That *no man ever did ſuch works as he*; convinced the multitude, That even *when the Meſſias ſhould come, he could not do greater works than thoſe*; and induced the Roman Centurion watching at his Croſs, even at the loweſt ebb of his Fortunes,

Fortunes, and after he had loſt his Life by an ignominious Puniſhment, to acknowledge him to be *the Son of God.* They were not performed once or twice, but frequently, upon all occaſions, and for many years together by himſelf and his Apoſtles: Not in Corners, or before a few Confidents; but in the Face of the world, in the publick Streets, before vaſt multitudes, and in all parts of the Earth. They tended not ſo much to raiſe the amazement and aſtoniſhment of Spectators, as all falſe Miracles do, as to relieve the Infirmities, cure the Diſeaſes, and procure the benefit of ſome part at leaſt of Mankind; and therein by a wonderful mixture of Wiſdom, ſerved no leſs to declare the Goodneſs, than the Power of God. Vol. 1.

That the Hiſtory of the Miracles and Life of our Saviour, as it is delivered to us in the Books of the New Teſtament is true, we have all the Reaſon in the world to believe. Theſe Books were written by Perſons, who were Eye-witneſſes of what they relate, or at leaſt who received Inſtructions from ſuch. They had all the advantages, which could poſſibly be required, of knowing the truth of them: And

ſo

Vol. 1. ſo could not be miſtaken in their Relations; and that they ſhould wilfully deceive us, we have no reaſon to believe. We might with as much reaſon call in doubt, and diſ-believe all the Relations of former Hiſtories, which depend upon no other Authority than that of their Writers: yet ſhould we juſtly eſteem him Man, who ſhould doubt whether there were ever ſuch Perſons, as *Cæſar* and *Alexander* in the world; and we daily regulate our Actions, and found our Concerns upon matters atteſted with no better Proofs.

But to our Comfort and entire conviction, Chriſtianity hath yet much greater Evidence. The Writers of theſe Books are known to have been Perſons of unqueſtioned Integrity, who, far from managing any worldly deſign or intereſt in this matter, quitted all the Conveniences of Life; underwent the moſt toilſome Labours and Miſeries; ſuffered Puniſhments, Contempt and Scorn; and at laſt laid down their Lives in Atteſtation of the truth of what they had related: Not to ſay, that they confirmed the truth of their report by Miracles while alive; and that their Holineſs, Sincerity and miracu-

lous

lous Power was in like manner atteſted for ſome Ages after by many pious and learned Perſons, who laid down their Lives in Teſtimony of their veracity, and wrought Miracles in Confirmation of it: until a great part of Mankind being by theſe convincing Proofs converted to the belief of Chriſtianity, and the truth of them fully made known to the world, Miracles became no longer neceſſary. All theſe things happened in a learned and inquiſitive Age, and were Matters of the greateſt moment, concerning no leſs than the eternal Happineſs or Miſery of Mankind. So that on both theſe Accounts, if the leaſt ground of Forgery or Impoſture could have been diſcovered in the Chriſtian Religion, it would have been impoſſible for it to have gained any Succeſs, or made any progreſs in the World. Eſpecially if we conſider with how great Zeal and Vehemency, both the Magiſtrates and Philoſophers of thoſe times oppoſed it, and undertook the Extirpation of it. They applied themſelves to this deſign with the utmoſt Diligence and Fervour, and left no ſtone unturned, whereby they might either diſcover any Impoſture in it, or ſtop Vol. I.

the

Vol. I. the Progreſs of it. But the Evidence of its truth, aſſiſted with the Divine Providence, bore down all oppoſition: *The blood of the Martyrs became the ſeed of the Church*; and its learned Adverſaries were forced to Confeſs its Doctrines to be Divine, and the Founder of it an extraordinary Perſon.

Laſtly, that the Writings of the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts were the ſame, which we now poſſeſs under their Names, and were conveyed uncorrupted through all Ages, appears not only from the conſtant Tradition of Chriſtians, and their great care to preſerve thoſe ſacred Monuments intire and uncorrupted, in which their eternal welfare was ſo nearly concerned: But alſo from the ſeveral Tranſlations made of them immediately after the times of the Apoſtles; ſome of which are now extant, from written Copies preſerved even to this day, written not long after the Apoſtolick times, and from the Citations of antient Writers in all Ages.

Thus I have briefly propoſed to you the Proofs, upon which the Chriſtian Religion depends; to which I might have added many more; as the exact Com-

Completion of all our Saviours Prophe- Vol. 1.
fies, more particularly in that remarka-
ble Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* within the
time prefixed by him; the Conſtancy,
Reſolution, and Number of Chriſtian
Martyrs in thoſe antient times, when
they had certain means of infallibly
knowing the truth of theſe Matters;
the Conqueſt, which under ſo many diſ-
advantages, it made over the fierceſt op-
poſition of the Roman Empire, and Hea-
then Philoſophy; and thoſe many extra-
ordinary Interpoſitions of Divine Pro-
vidence in favour of it, which have
ſignally appeared in all Ages of the
Church; but theſe ſhall at preſent ſuf-
fice.

The Fourth SERMON.

PREACH'D
November, 1688.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

1 Pet. III. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

IN Discoursing on these Words, I did propose to insist on these two Heads.

I. That the Christian Religion is agreeable to the Principles of Reason, and carrieth sufficient Evidence along with it.

II. That it is the Duty of every Christian, not wanting the means of sufficient Instruction, to enable himself to give a Reason of his Faith.

The former of these I dispatched in the foregoing Sermon. I now proceed to the Second Head of Discourse: Namely,

II. That it is the Duty of every Christian, not wanting the means of sufficient

cient Instruction, to enable himself to give a Reason of his Faith. That this, not the constant resolution of professing the Faith at all times without Fear or Cowardice, was the Primary intent of the Apostolick Precept in my Text, appeareth, in that the Apostle willeth us to do this πρὸς ἀπολογίαν, (*which our Translators have not so exactly rendred*) by way of Apology; or in Confutation of the Calumnies and Objections brought against our Religion by the Adversaries of it. Vol. 1.

I will not say that such a perfect and compleat knowledge is absolutely the Duty of every private Christian, so that he cannot be saved without it. God requireth of no man any thing beyond his natural strength or capacity; or which he had no Opportunities, nor means to attain unto. We know how great a part of the Christian Church, over-run with Tyranny and Oppression, hath insensibly fallen into a deplorable Ignorance. These we cannot in Reason condemn, as wanting all means of better Instruction; but rather applaud their Constancy, and pray for their Delivery. We know also how great a Society of Christians labours

Vol. I. under miserable Ignorance, and the consequence of its gross Errours, by the artifice and contrivance of their Guides, who deny to them the use of the Scriptures, and teach them to content themselves with an implicit Faith. These also we will not in Charity condemn; *To their own Master they either Stand or fall.* Lastly, we are not insensible how many Members of our own Communion, either through want of leisure, or natural imbecility of understanding, through default of Education, or rather accidental defects un-foreseen, and unprovided for, are but meanly instructed in the Mysteries of the Christian Faith. But to us, who want neither means of Instruction, nor Capacity of receiving them, no excuse is left, if we do not improve them to a full Comprehension of the Mysteries of our Faith, whereby we may both obtain a rational Conviction of the truth of it in our selves, and be enabled to vindicate the honour of our Lord and Saviour from the Contradiction of foolish and unreasonable Men.

Christianity indeed is not in our Age opposed with that open and barefac't Confidence, wherewith it was in the Apostles

Apoſtles time, when it was forced to *wreſtle with Principalities and Powers, and ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places*, the united force of a Victorious and learned Empire: Yet we want not ſecret impugners of our moſt Holy Faith: who if by the natural Light of Reaſon and remorſe of Conſcience, they be reſtrained from profeſſing their ſecret Atheiſm, and denying the Exiſtence of a God; yet ſtick not to oppoſe all revealed Religions, and eſpecially Chriſtianity, becauſe moſt contrary to their beloved Luſts; in defence of which only they maintain their impious Opinions. It is the intereſt of theſe Men, that Chriſtianity ſhould be falſe, that ſo the licentious practice of their Luſts and Paſſions may not be abridged to them; and the Expectation of eternal Puniſhments imbitter all their Pleaſures. For to the Honour of Chriſtianity be it ſaid, that in theſe latter Ages it hath had no Enemies, but Men of profligate and debauched Lives, who either denied the Being of a God, or lived as *without God in the world*. However, the Conviction of theſe Men is far more difficult, than antiently of the Heathen Philoſophers: Of whom many

Vol. I.

Vol. I. cerely ſearched after the Truth, which commonly ended in the diſcovery of it, and embracing the Chriſtian Religion: whereas theſe diſpute only for the Love of their Luſts and ſenſual Pleaſures; are thence tranſported with violent Prejudices, wilfully ſhut their Eyes againſt the Truth, caſt the words of Conviction behind them, and *hate to be reformed.* To vindicate the Honour of God, of Chriſt and our Religion againſt the Blaſphemies of ſuch men, is the Duty of every Chriſtian in his place and ſtation, and as opportunities are miniſtred to him. Nor are there wanting thoſe among us, who openly and with great exceſs of apparent Zeal, ſeek to withdraw us from our moſt Holy Religion, endeavouring to impoſe upon us the belief of pernicious Errours and Superſtitions. They oppoſe not directly indeed the Faith of Chriſt, but corrupt it with Errours and falſe Opinions; rend in ſunder the Unity of the Church, by promoting and *perſwading* a Schiſmatical departure from it; and openly impugn the moſt Holy *Reform'd* Religion of our Church, which is indeed no other, than the pure and genuine Chriſtianity, by decry-

decrying it as Heretical and Damnable. Vol. 1.

To obviate the Designs of these men nothing can be more effectual, than to apply our selves diligently to the study of Christianity, to enquire in the Holy Scriptures what Christ hath revealed to us, and to search the Design and Mysteries of his Religion. This is become the Duty of every private Christian at this time; that so his Ignorance may not lay him open to the Attempts of designing Men, who *lay in wait to deceive*: and betray him to be a prey to Errour and Superstition. To this pursuance and encrease of knowledge, our Church encourageth, and earnestly intreats us. She taketh no refuge in the Ignorance of her Communicants, nor discourageth them from examining her Doctrines and Opinions; as well knowing, that this Examination will end in a full Conviction of the truth of them; and that the Improvement of our knowledge in Divine Matters, and an impartial study of them, will infallibly secure us from the delusions of her Enemies. And this is the first Reason why every private Christian ought to be fully instructed concern-

Vol. 1. ing the Reaſons of his Faith; that ſo he may anſwer the Objections, and eſcape the Aſſaults of thoſe who endeavour to withdraw us from the truth, or ſeduce us to the belief of any Errour.

II. It is a ſtrict Enquiry into the Reaſons and Arguments of our Religion, and full Comprehenſion of them, which properly maketh Faith to be praiſe worthy in it ſelf, acceptable to God, and capable of reward. An aſſent to Chriſtianity without reſpect to the Arguments of its truth, may be a Happineſs to ignorant Perſons, in as much as they enjoy thoſe opportunities, which lead to ſuch an aſſent; ſuch as are Education in a Chriſtian Countrey, or under Chriſtian Parents or Maſters; whereby through cuſtom, or reſpect to the Authority of thoſe Perſons, they embrace Chriſtianity, and are led thereby to the knowledge of God, the Practice of their Duty, and dependence upon the Merits of a Crucified Saviour. But ſurely we cannot imagine this to be an Act deſerving the Favour of God, or even comparable to the meaneſt of moral Vertues: Before all which a true Divine Faith is ſo frequently, and ſo eminently preferred in Scripture. For ſince ſuch a

Diſpoſition

Diſpoſition of Mind, I mean an inclina- Vol. I.
tion to follow the Example and Autho-
rity of our Country, Parents or Maſters,
in aſſenting to the Religion received by
them, may and doth equally diſpoſe Men
to the embracing of Errour, as of Truth;
it is to be accounted a thing wholly in-
different; and if it proceeds from
a wilful Negligence of examining the
Grounds of any Religion, when means
and ability are not wanting to us, is ex-
tremely vicious; but no otherwiſe lau-
dable, than in the happy conſequences
of it, and opportunities it may poſſibly
miniſter of coming to the Truth.

Indeed Chriſtianity is ſo admirably fitted to the perfection and Salvation of Mankind, that it cannot be aſſented to upon any Grounds whatſoever, even by the moſt ignorant Perſons, without a precedent habit of Mind, which is truly vertuous and excellent; and in an extraordinary manner teſtifying a profound obedience to the Commands of God in the Perſon aſſenting, may not unfitly be thought to qualifie him for the Divine Favour. For Chriſtianity propoſing ſuch Rules, as reſtrain the corrupt Luſts and Paſſions of men; teaching a ſtrict Sobriety and Abſti-

nence from unlawful Pleasures, forbiding the satisfaction of the most darling Lusts; and commanding men to deny to themselves, what they are apt to imagine an extreme Happiness, the unlimited Fruition of all sensual Pleasures; and even upon occasion to forsake the Conveniencies of Life it self, *Choosing rather to suffer affliction, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*: None can assent to a Religion of this Nature, without first overcoming his Lusts and Passions, and being throughly convinced, that all these ought to give place to the Command and Will of God, which he believes to be proposed to him in the Christian Religion.

Such a Disposition is truly excellent; and in them who want means of attaining a more perfect knowledge is rewarded by God, as a true and perfect Act of Faith: who condescends to the imperfection of Mankind; and requiring of none more than he hath given to him, supplyeth by his Mercy what is wanting to the perfection of our Faith. But then such a Disposition of Mind is so far from being a true and proper Faith, that it may consist without it, and be joyned with Erour. Neither

ther can we imagine that Faith, which Vol. I.
hath all those glorious and particular
Promises of Reward annexed to it in the
Holy Scripture, consists only in assent-
ing to, and firmly believing, what we
are assured God hath revealed to us.
For that we cannot but do. None e-
ver that believed the Existence of a
God, dis-believed what he was per-
swaded to have been revealed by him.
To do that were to suppose that God
could err or lye, and consequently were
not God. Such an assent therefore be-
ing necessary and unavoidable, is not
capable of a Reward, and hath nothing
excellent in it. No Man can be an In-
fidel in this Sense: And therefore none
can be esteemed faithful from it.

And hence it appears, that to have
only moral and not demonstrative
Proofs, is so far from prejudicing the
truth of Christianity, that it is both
necessary and advantageous to it. For
if the Truths of Christianity had been
self evident, or placed in as clear a
Light, as the Sun in Heaven, Assent
to them had been necessary, and no Act
of Choice, and therefore incapable of
reward. Whereas now God hath so
wisely contrived it, that a rational As-

sent

Vol. I. sent to it, and perfect Comprehension of it, will exercise the diligence, obedience and reason of Mankind, in enquiring into whatsoever carrieth the stamp of Divine Authority; in submitting to whatsoever justly appears to bear that sacred Character; in using aright our Faculties of Reason and Understanding, and employing them to the Glory of God. All these Acts and Habits are in themselves praise worthy, and rewarded by God, with the Reward of Faith, that is, with infinite and eternal Happiness.

For 'tis in a rational and just Assent to the Christian Religion, for the sake of those Arguments which perswade it to have proceeded from the Divine Authority, and a due use of our Reason in discovering its Divine Original, that a true and perfect Faith consists. For upon Conviction of its having been revealed by God, we cannot but yield to the truth of it; and if we desire or expect to attain the Rewards proposed by it, betake our selves to a serious obedience to the Precepts of it. For as a due use of our Understanding is no less difficult in it self, and advantageous to us, than of our Will; so we ought to

suppose

suppose, that God will no less favourably accept it, and no less highly reward it. Certainly a right use of our Reason tendeth no less effectually to the Honour and Glory of God, than a due Command of our Will. For God is no less dishonoured by mean and unworthy Apprehensions of him by Idolatry and Superstition; by denying his Existence, or debasing his Attributes, which are the effects of misguided Reason; than by an open Violation of his known Precepts, which proceeds from the Corruption of the Will. And thus it appears, that a full Enquiry into the Reasons and Arguments of the Christian Religion, and a perfect knowledge of the truth of them, not only contributes exceedingly, but in Persons having means to attain it, is absolutely necessary to beget a true and perfect Faith, and secure to us the reward of it. Vol. 1.

III. A distinct and clear knowledge of the Mysteries of our Faith, and Rules of our Religion, will afford to us many and great Motives to the practice of our Duty, and direct us in the performance of it.

It is the peculiar Prerogative of the Christian

Vol. 1. Christian Religion, that the more we search into the Reasons and Constitutions of it, the more fully the *Divinity* of it will appear. Every new Discovery will give us fresh occasions to admire the Wisdom, Goodness and Justice of God, eminently conspiring in the Revelation of it. This will excite in us, if we be not insensible, a profound Veneration of the Divine Majesty, an ardent Love of his Excellencies, and the most intense degree of Gratitude. It will manifest to us the Misery of Man and his lost Condition without the Sacrifice of the Cross, which might expiate for his Sins, and mediate his Pardon: and hereby will increase our Sense of the Divine Mercy; will enhance the value of that inestimable Sacrifice; teach us to adore, love and devote our selves to our Saviour, to resign up our belief to his Revelations, as to our Prophet; to depend wholly upon the Expiation of our sins once made, and Intercession for us always continued by him, as of our High Priest; to yield an intire Obedience to his Commands and Precepts, as to our King.

Can we view the Love and Mercy of God manifested in our Redemption, the wonder-

wonderful Contrivances of Providence, both to ſecure the Divine Juſtice and Honour, and yet give Pardon to ſinful Man, and not be wound up into an Extaſie of Love and Admiration? Can we conſider the moſt wiſe Methods, whereby God brought this wonderful deſign to perfection, and trace the footſteps of it through all Ages: can we think upon the Majeſty of him who condeſcended to ſuffer for us, and the unworthineſs of Man to receive ſo great a Favour, without filling our Underſtandings with awful and reverent Conceptions of him; our Wills with a paſſionate deſire of Union with him; and enlarging all the Faculties of our Souls, to approach his Preſence, and receive his influence? Or can we hope to raiſe our Souls to a worthy Senſe of the Divine Favours and Benefits, and carry up our Affections to a gratitude not inferour to the Greatneſs of them, without a perfect knowledge of their Deſign and Excellency? Surely the Admonitions of the Prophets, Apoſtles, and even our Bleſſed Saviour, were not in vain; which ſo earneſtly preſs us to the ſtudy of Divine Truths, command us *to ſearch the Scriptures*; aſſure us, That *they were written* Vol. 1.

for

Vol. I. *for our instruction*; and which is to be observed, commend those who were conversant in them above all other Persons. Yet how small a part of the Holy Scripture are those things, which are absolutely necessary to be believed? The infinitely greater part of it, serveth only to declare the extraordinary Acts of his Providence to the Church, and Testimonies of his Love to Mankind; to celebrate his Mercy and Goodness; and induce us by manifold Arguments to our Duty.

Yet these also hath the Divine Wisdom thought necessary to the knowledge and instruction of Men; and surely not without Reason. For what can be more worthy of Man, more perfective of his Nature, or conducing to enstate him in the greatest Happiness, than to comprehend the Riches of the Divine Goodness; to entertain noble Conceptions of his Creator; and by a constant Meditation and exalted Knowledge raise his Affections to a vehement Love of him? By this we anticipate the Joys of Heaven, and begin to possess them even before we are received into them. For both Reason and Revelation assureth us, that the Fruition of

of Celeſtial Happineſs conſiſts in a conſtant and unwearied Contemplation and Love of the Divine Perfections. Vol. I.

The ſtudy of theſe ſacred Matters was eſteemed the beſt indication of a pious Mind, & the moſt certain method of attaining the utmoſt degree of Happineſs upon Earth, even under the Old Law, when God had not yet made a full Manifeſtation of himſelf, and the Reaſons of the Divine Oeconomy were obſcure, and hid under a veil of Ceremonies and Ritual Obſervations. For proof of this, to go no farther than the CXIX *Pſalm*, wherein ſuch inimitable ſtrains of Piety, Devotion, and an ardent Love of God appear. The Holy Pſalmiſt every where aſcribes his Proficiency in Vertue, and the inward ſatisfaction and Happineſs of his mind, to the aſſiduous ſtudy of the Divine Laws. *I will thank thee with an unfeigned heart, when I ſhall have learned the judgments of thy righteouſneſs. Open thou mine eyes, that I may ſee the wondrous things of thy law. For I remembred thine everlaſting judgments, O Lord, and received comfort. Lord, what love have I unto thy law, all the day long is my ſtudy in it. O how ſweet are thy words unto my throat, yea ſweeter than honey*

ney unto my mouth. *Thy word is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths. For thy testimonies are my delight and my Counsellours.* See all the Marks of a Soul big with Devotion, and filled with transports of Joy, from the Consideration of the Divine Goodness and Excellency manifested under the Mosaick Law. But alas how inconsiderable is this, if compared to that greater Light, which Christianity hath brought into the world? What satisfaction and advantage may not we now hope for from the study and Contemplation of the more perfect Law of Christ, that hath revealed to us *the Mystery which hath been hid from Ages*, and represents to us the Divine Goodness, not under a veil and shadow, but in its full Dimensions?

The antient Christians were truly sensible of this, who placed their Happiness, on this side Heaven, in this Holy study, chose rather to part with their Lives than Bibles, and branded those, who delivered them up to their Persecutors, although in exchange for their dearest Blood, with the name of *Traditores* or *Traitors*. And in the last Age our Forefathers gave eminent Instances of

of the ſame perſwaſion and reſolution; when great numbers of them ventured their Lives to enjoy the advantage of reading the Scriptures in their Mother tongue; and rather than forego that Benefit, choſe to forfeit their Lives to the Perſecution of a Church, whoſe intereſt it was that thoſe Divine Truths ſhould not be known. It is our Happineſs to enjoy that advantage in a moſt eminent manner, to have the Scriptures tranſlated moſt exactly into our own Language, to read them ſecurely, and hear them weekly explained to us. Let us manifeſt that we are not inſenſible of ſo great a Benefit by a right uſe of it; leaſt we fall into the Condemnation of thoſe, who abuſe the Divine Mercy; and that Candleſtick, of which we are not worthy, be removed from us. Vol. I.

It remains, that we briefly apply what hath been ſaid,

And firſt, If our Religion be ſo excellent and rational, attended with ſuch Evidence and Conviction; it is our Duty to maintain a firm and conſtant Profeſſion of it at all times, or in the words of my Text, *To be ready always to give an account of it*; not to

Vol. I. diſſemble it for fear or intereſt, much leſs betray it by a denial of it. The great ends of Religion are to ſecure the Honour of God, and advance the Happineſs of Mankind. By ſuch ſhameful Cowardize both theſe ends are defeated; the Honour of God is wounded, and the hopes of Happineſs intirely deſtroyed. Hereby Men renounce all dependence upon God, diſown him to be their Lord and Maſter, and bid defiance to him. Nor may we flatter our ſelves, that this execrable Crime of Apoſtacy conſiſts only in denying all Chriſtianity, and wholly renouncing our Saviour: to yield up the leaſt truth which we are convinced to be Divine; to aſſent to the leaſt Errour, which we believe to be falſe; to forſake a Communion, which we know to be pure and lawful, to embrace one which we are perſwaded is corrupt and erroneous; is no leſs truly the ſin of Apoſtacy, and will undoubtedly meet with the ſame Puniſhment. The Nature of the ſin is the ſame in both Caſes, that we wilfully recede from the Truth, and affront the Divine Majeſty by preferring a Lye to his revealed Will. The maintenance of Truth, and dire-

cting

cting our Conduct by the Dictates of it, is the Dignity of Man, and perfection of his Soul. To betray the most inconsiderable Truth to any temporal Considerations, is a plain Confession, that we have inverted the order of Nature, and subjected our more noble part, the Soul, to the Lusts and Passions of the Body; an Indignity unworthy a rational Being, which prostitutes the Honour of his Nature, Ranks him among brute Beasts, and from being the head of all visible Creatures, degrades him into the condition of a Slave to dust and ashes? But when Eternity, and an Interest infinitely greater than any which can be promoted on Earth by such Apostacy, lyes at stake: when immortality and everlasting Happiness are destroyed by it: nay, when the utmost Displeasure of an Almighty God, and the direful effects of it, eternal Torments, are the consequences of it; to preferr a few trifling Pleasures of this World, disclaim all hopes of Happiness in another Life, and incurr the Divine Vengeance; is a height of Folly which all the Affairs and Examples of this Life cannot equal; an Impiety, which neither the Art of Men or Devils can exceed. Vol. I.

Vol. 1. When the Intereſt of Truth is concerned, the Honour of God engaged; to lay down our Lives in Teſtimony of the one, and Vindication of the other; to forego all the Conveniences of this Life; to deſpiſe all worldly Conſiderations, and with a generous Contempt overlook all the Soſlicitations, and Threats of men; this the Dignity of our Nature requires of us; this our Duty to God obliges us to; this the Expectation of a future ſtate leads us to. For ſurely we no longer deſerve the Name or Character of men, than while we continue rational. We deny all Relation to God, when we ſacrifice his Commands to our Intereſts; and diſclaim all Title to a future ſtate, when we yield up the Conditions of it for the ſake of a preſent advantage. Yet how many Examples of ſuch Apoſtacy hath the Church deplored in all Ages? And I wiſh our Age afforded none of thoſe, who have betrayed the Profeſſion of their Faith (I will not ſay to the fear of Death, for ſo great a Terrour all Spirits cannot overcome, *And we of this Nation, thanks be to God, do not ſuffer*) but, to the fear of Poverty, or perhaps to the hopes of continuing

or

or advancing their Preferment in the world. A moſt amazing wickedneſs, that Men ſhould Sell their God at ſo low a price, and exchange their Religion for ſuch mean Conſiderations: "*Reſign to me the hopes of Heaven, and I* "*will give you a poſſeſſion in the Earth:* "*give me up your Soul, and I will* "*enrich your Body: deny your Creator,* "*and I will give you Honour among your* "*Fellow-Creatures:* A Propoſal, which even a Heathen Philoſopher would entertain with Scorn; and every ſober Chriſtian with a pious Horrour. Theſe are the Flatteries of the world, and with theſe the Prince of the world attempted our Saviour: *All theſe things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worſhip me.* But our Saviour immediately rejected ſuch baſe Propoſals with a generous Diſdain; and with a *get thee behind me Satan*, manifeſted with how great Indignation he had received them: thereby giving us an Example how we ought to behave our ſelves upon ſuch occaſions; and not to admit even the thoughts of ſuch a Crime. Vol. I.

For ſurely in the cauſe of God, even to deliberate with our ſelves whether we ſhall betray it or no, is a degree of Apoſtacy; in that Caſe *delibe-*

Vol. I. *raſſe eſt deciviſſe*, and *the thought of fooliſhneſs is ſin.* To put the queſtion to our own Souls, is to trifle with the Divine Majeſty, to diſhonour our Religion, and degrade our Nature. But to decide it in Favour of our Luſts, and the petty Temptations of the world, is to *fill up the meaſure of our iniquity*, and in the moſt reproachful Senſe *turn the grace of God into wantonneſs*. I ſpeak of thoſe who are convinced of the truth of any Religion or Communion, at the ſame time, that they forſake it. As for thoſe who may pretend Reaſons of Conſcience, and Conviction of Judgment for their departure from our Church; let them ſeriouſly conſider, whether this be not indeed a Pretence, and whether they can really anſwer it to God, and their own Conſciences. Let them examine themſelves, whether they were not byaſſed in their Judgments, and powerfully prejudiced in Favour of that Communion, to which they have revolted, by the Temptation of ſecular intereſt and advantage; in this Caſe, let them know that God will not be mocked; and that to force our Underſtandings, is no leſs Criminal than to force our Conſciences.

God hath propoſed ſufficient direction

on to us in the Holy Scripture, and will by no means pardon us, if we wilfully shut our eyes against the Truth. We need not go any farther than the words of my Text for this direction. The Apostles commands all Christians to *be ready to give an answer of the reason of the faith that is in them.* If then any Society of men discourageth and overthrows the use of reason in private Christians; if it teacheth Doctrines contrary to Reason, and refuseth to give any account of them; we may infallibly conclude it to be erroneous, and to have departed from the true Faith. Yet we know a Church, that hath wholly evacuated the Apostles Precept, by inhibiting to private Christians the use of Reason in Divine Matters, and setting up an infallible Judge to whom all ought blindly to submit; that useth her utmost endeavours to disable private Christians from *giving a Reason of their Faith*, by forbidding them to read the Scripture; that hath made Christianity irrational, by adding to it absurd and contradictive Doctrines. For what reason can be given, that men should not use their Reason? What Reason can be assigned for Transubstan-

Vol. 1.

Vol. 1. tiation, which is directly contrary both to Sense and Reason? What reason for a blind Submission to a pretended infallible Judge, which defeats all use of Reason? But these things are too apparent. I omit them, and pass to the second and last Branch of Application. That

2. We ought to adorn this most rational and Holy Religion of our Saviour with a correspondent Holiness and Purity of Life. The Apostle draws this inference in the words immediately preceding and following my Text: *But sanctifie the Lord God in your hearts, and, having a good conscience*; and indeed most naturally. For if it be the highest Perverseness to reject the Gospel after so clear a Demonstration of the Divinity of it; what a degree of Folly and Impiety must it be in those, who are perswaded of the truth of it, to contradict the Evidence and Design of it by the wickedness of their Lives, and live as if they believed it to be most false? The Apostle urgeth it as the utmost Aggravation of the sin of the wiser Heathens; that they *held the truth in unrighteousness*: and surely with much more force will the Argument fall

fall upon immoral Christians. For the Heathen Sages dissembled their Opinions from the world, and so no wonder that they directed not their Actions by them: whereas these publickly profess their belief of Christianity, and yet live in open Contradiction to it. And indeed it is a most astonishing Consideration, that rational Creatures should deliberately violate those Laws, upon which they acknowledge the hopes of Eternity to depend. Do we really believe the Christian Religion to be Divine; and yet go on without remorse to trample under foot its Laws and Precepts? Are we perswaded that infinite Rewards in another world attend the performance of our Duty in this; and yet prefer the Temptations and Pleasures of the World to the Attainment of them? Do we profess our Belief of eternal Punishments; and yet are not affrighted from the Commission of any pleasing sin by the terror of them? However we may pretend a firm Assent to all these Articles; yet certainly it will be impossible to perswade a considering Man, that the belief of them can be reconciled with the Practice of the contrary. And after Vol. I.

 ter all, if we ſhould be allowed to be, what we pretend, Believers in Chriſt; *Can faith ſave us?* No, *Shew me thy faith by thy works.* If a ſober Heathen ſhould come among us, and compare the Rules of Chriſt, with the Lives of Chriſtians; the exerciſe of Piety, Temperance, and Chaſtity, and all moral Vertues commanded by the one in the higheſt degree, and upon the ſevereſt Penalties; and Impiety, Intemperance, Luſt, and all enormous Vices openly and greedily practiſed by the other; he would be tempted to believe that the Religion of Chriſt were no more than a pleaſing Fable, wherewith Chriſtians ſometimes entertained themſelves. An ancient Father, who lived in the declining times of Chriſtianity, tells us, how the Heathens in his Age formed diſhonourable thoughts of Chriſt, from the ſcandalous Lives of his Diſciples: *Quomodo bonus eſt Magiſter, cujus, tam malos videmus Diſcipulos?* How can he be a good Lawgiver, that hath no better Followers? how can his Laws be excellent, that do not reform the Lives of their Profeſſours? And then proceeds to deplore this Scandal. *In nobis Chriſtus opprobrium patitur:*

Thus

Thus we defame our most excellent Religion, dishonour our Saviour, and blaspheme him in our Lives. Let us live up to the Rules of our Religion, and by a Conscientious practice of them, manifest that we are perswaded of the truth of it; otherwise it will be in vain *to be ready always to give an answer to every one, that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us.* This were unanswerably to refute our Arguments by our Practice, and add to our own Condemnation. Let us demonstrate the Divinity of our Religion, by the influence it hath upon our Lives; and profess an intire Belief of it by a constant Obedience to it; that so we may not fall short of the Promises annexed to it; and *others seeing our good works, may glorifie our Father, which is in heaven.* Vol. I.

The

The Fifth SERMON.

PREACH'D

December 2d. 1688.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Rom. II. 4.

Not knowing, that the goodneſs of God leadeth thee to repentance.

THE infinite and wonderful Love of God towards Mankind, is in nothing more viſible and conſpicuous, than in the various methods which he makes uſe of to draw us to himſelf. The Faculties and Paſſions of our Soul are not more numerous and different, than are the means which he hath employed to render us happy, and oblige us to the performance of our Duty: inducing us by all thoſe Motives and Arguments which in other moral Actions are wont to make impreſſion on us.

He

He hath engaged our Understandings, by proposing to our belief and practice, a reasonable and holy Religion, attended with the greatest Evidence, and in all things highly agreeable to the Nature of Mankind, and first Principles of Reason. He hath assured our Wills, by presenting such Objects to it, as employ every single Passion of it. If the desire of obtaining the greatest good can move us; he hath allured us by the Promise of an infinite and eternal Happiness. If fear of Misery hath any influence upon our minds; he hath deterred us from the Violation of his Laws, by affixing to it the most severe and terrible Punishments. If hope can excite us; he hath given to us an infallible assurance of more than we can conceive. If Love can affect us; he hath obliged us by the greatest Benefits. Lastly, If reason and the sense of our Duty, if Rewards and Punishments, if Favours and Benefits can together engage us; he hath united all in one most holy and excellent Religion.

And in this appears the wonderful Goodness of God; that whereas any one of these methods were all alone sufficient to oblige Mankind to the practice of

Vol. I. of our Duty, he hath chose to employ them all; that so that Attribute of Mercy, wherein he most delights, might be more conspicuous; and the impenitence of Mankind in opposition to it, might not only become irrational, but even monstrous. It had been sufficient, as to the Obligation of it, to have proposed a reasonable Religion, without annexing to it any Rewards or Punishments: We had been obliged by the Laws of Creation to embrace and practice it, to obey the Dictates of Reason, that by obeying them we might have procured the perfection of our Nature.

Many Duties do arise from the Consideration of our Nature, and that Relation which we bear to God and the whole world, which would not have ceased to oblige us, although no Revelation had been made unto us. Or if it had pleased God to re-inforce these Duties by a particular Revelation; yet was it not necessary, that he should entail any rewards on the performance of them, as being parts of our Duty antecedently to any such Revelation.

If he had required of us more than was naturally suggested to us by the light

light of Reaſon, even the moſt difficult and laborious Duties, He might juſtly have done it, by the right of Creation, as being the Author of our Being. It had been a ſufficient Reward to Mankind, to have received from God the benefit of Exiſtence, and the Continuation of it, and to enjoy the ordinary effects of his Providence. If to theſe he had added Threats and Puniſhments, he might reaſonably be ſuppoſed to have abundantly ſecured Mankind from the neglect of his Commands; ſince none but the moſt ſtupid and brutal Perſons would, for the Frution of a few, not only irrational, but trifling Vanities, incurr the diſpleaſure of an Almighty Being, and draw upon themſelves the effects of his Vengeance. Or if to Actions in themſelves indifferent, and not in the leaſt contributing to the perfection of our Nature, Actions having nothing extraordinary in them, beſide the greatneſs of their Difficulty, he had adjoyned a Promiſe of infinite Rewards; yet could we not have omitted them without the higheſt degree of Folly: when the performance of them might procure ſo vaſt a Reward; the ſole hopes of which might induce us to force

Vol. 1. force our Inclinations, and do violence to our Nature.

But when to the common Benefits of Creation and Preſervation, he hath added the Revelation of Divine Truths, and adapted thoſe Revelations to the capacity and imperfection of our Nature; when he hath urged the practice of theſe revealed Truths, by the Promiſe of Reward on the one ſide, and the Threats of Puniſhment on the other: And, as if all this were not ſufficient, proceeds to heap new Favours on us; intreats us as a Friend, bears with us as a Father, and by Prodigies of Mercy leads us to our own Happineſs; we muſt profeſs our ſelves aſtoniſhed and confounded at ſo ſtupendious a Goodneſs; and acknowledge our ſelves unable to celebrate, as we ought, the Mercy of God; who when he might have ſatisfied both the Juſtice and Holineſs of his Nature, by requiring of us the performance of the greateſt Duties without any Reward, or proportioned his Reward to the imperfection of our Service, or propoſed both Rewards and Duties, without adding continued Acts of Mercy and Forgiveneſs; yet contributed all to the Happineſs of Mankind,

kind, and thereby made the Emanation of his Goodneſs, to be no leſs infinite than his Nature, the Fountain of them: Who when it was ſufficient alone to manifeſt the Juſtice of his proceeding, to appeal even to the Judgment of Mankind, as he did ſometime in the Prophet, *Are not my ways equal, are not your ways unequal? Oh houſe of Iſrael*; choſe rather to conquer us by kindneſs, and by the greatneſs of his Goodneſs lead us to Repentance. Vol. I.

By the Goodneſs of God, in this place, we are not ſo much to underſtand that incommunicable Attribute of perfect Holineſs; upon account of which our Saviour ſaid, *Matth.* XIX. 17. *There is none good but one, that is God*: As his kindneſs and benignity, which inclines him to exerciſe Acts of Beneficence, Love and Mercy; which is frequently in Scripture called by the name of Goodneſs, as *Pſalm* LXXIII. 1. *Truly God is good unto Iſrael, even unto ſuch as are of a clean heart*: And again, *Pſalm* CXLV. 9. *The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works*: Where his Goodneſs is aptly expreſſed by the Tenderneſs of his Mercy.

Vol. 1. The former Attribute indeed repreſenteth God to Mankind, as a fit object of Worſhip and Adoration; and inciteth brave and generous Souls to the exerciſe of Virtue, that ſo they may attain a nearer Similitude and Conformity to their Creator; the imitation of whom is their utmoſt perfection. But the latter chiefly creates in us that Love of God, which is the beſt and moſt efficacious Principle of all religious Actions: by repreſenting to us his infinite affection to Mankind, his benefactive Nature, and proneneſs to Acts of Mercy and Compaſſion; which even although we forget our Duty, and neglect our Intereſt, cannot but excite a lively Senſe of gratitude in us, and a profound Veneration of the Divine Mercy.

This Beneficence and indulgence of God, is deſigned in the Text by the term Goodneſs, or τὸ χρηστὸν: an eminent inſtance of which the Apoſtle had laid down in the former part of this *Verſe*, in that ἀνοχὴ and μακροθυμία, Forbearance and Long-ſuffering, whereby God does not immediately inflict the deſerved Puniſhments upon Sinners, but with-

with-holds his anger, and patiently a- Vol. I.
waits their Repentance; whereby he
does not presently revenge the Injuries
and Affronts done to his Laws and Per-
son by the sins of Mankind, but com-
passionates our Nature; and at all times
reserveth Mercy for penitent Sinners.
An Attribute than which nothing can
render God more amiable and dear unto
us, or more effectually secure our Obe-
dience to him; were not the Perverse-
ness of Mankind no less infinite than
his Goodness.

Yet did many in that Age, and, as I fear, more in our Times, make a contrary use of this Goodness, by thence taking Encouragement to continue in their sins, because *they see no Vengeance to be speedily executed*, and experience in themselves and others, the Forbearance and Long-suffering of God. The Apostle complains of these Men in the former part of the Verse, That *they despised the riches of the goodness, forbearance and long-suffering of God*; and from these Attributes infers a contrary Conclusion to what they had formed, namely, That this ought rather to dispose us to repentance and reformation of Life, by en-

Vol. I. forcing all other Arguments of our Duty with a powerful Obligation of gratitude: which is violated in a moſt enormous manner, by thoſe who abuſed the Divine Mercy, to a contrary intent, *Not knowing that the goodneſs of God leadeth us to repentance.*

In handling theſe words, I ſhall endeavour to illuſtrate and improve the Apoſtles Argument, by conſidering it, as well in Relation to that influence, which it ought to have upon all our Actions in general, as in diſpoſing us to this Duty of Repentance in particular. In Diſcourſing of the firſt Head, I will lay down theſe two Propoſitions.

I. That gratitude, or a right Senſe of our Obligation, ariſing from the conſideration of the infinite Benefits, and Mercies of God towards us, was intended by God, to be to us the grand Motive of obedience to his Laws.

II. That it is the beſt and moſt effectual Motive, which could be employed for that Purpoſe.

I. Then, That gratitude, or *&c.* And this appears from the very Nature and end of Religion, which was intended to

to bring Man to the practice of his Duty, and consequently to Happiness and Salvation, by other Arguments, than what arose from the bare Consideration of the Divine Attributes, and our own Relation to God our Creator, our Selves, and our fellow Creatures, suggested by the light of Reason. If these Considerations had been duly pondered by our first Parents, they would have prevented the Misery of their Fall. And that they were sufficient none will deny, who acknowledgeth their Fall to have been an effect of Choice, not of Necessity. Yet was the light of Revelation, which God conferred on them, very small and dim in respect of that Evidence, which God conferred on following Ages. He shew them the means whereby they might obtain remission of their Sins, by promising that in due time, *The seed of the woman should break the serpents head*, and thereby to the Obligation of Creation added that of Redemption. Vol. I.

But it was the Memory of their Creation, yet fresh in the Minds of men, that maintained Religion in the world, and preserved a right Sense of the Majesty of God, and their Duty

Vol. 1. to him. It could not ſo eaſily be forgotten, that God had produced Man out of nothing, and eminently diſtinguiſhed him from all other Creatures, by giving him Dominion over them. So great a Benefit could not eaſily be obliterated from their Minds, but for many Ages kept alive an awful regard of the Divine Power and Beneficence. When the Memory of that decayed, and therewith an univerſal Corruption of Life and Manners enſued, God re-inforced it with the Benefit of preſerving *Noah* and his family from the common Deſtruction of Mankind. His Deſcendants could not but for many Ages retain a lively Senſe of ſo ſignal a Mercy, which had reſcued them from an univerſal Calamity, and manifeſted thereby how dear they were to God.

Yet in time, the remembrance of this Benefit grew faint; and Men thought themſelves little concerned in that, which was common to them with the reſt of Mankind, I mean the Benefits of Creation and Preſervation. They required nearer and more particular Teſtimonies of the Divine Favour, which being appropriate to themſelves, might diſtinguiſh them from other Men, by a greater

greater Participation of the Divine Bounty. This was the effect indeed of an irrational Judgment, and prevailing ingratitude: (for was it not enough that God was the Author and Continuer of their Beings, to engage them to his Service?) But an effect, to which the corrupt Nature of Mankind was so prone; that to restore decay'd Religion in the World, and revive the true Worship of himself, he found it necessary to set apart a peculiar People, whom he might oblige by particular Benefits to retrieve that gratitude, which the Sense of his universal Benefits ought in all reason to have produced, yet wanted its effect. Vol. I.

Hence forward God was worshipped primarily, not as the Creator of Mankind, and producer of the ordinary effects of Providence; but as the Author of particular and peculiar Favours. Which however could have no other direct influence upon the minds of Men thus signally obliged, than to produce an extraordinary Sense of gratitude; since the common Benefits of Creation and Conservation tended more naturally to beget a right Apprehension of the Divine Omnipotence, and our de-

Vol. I. pendance on it. Thus God ſeparated *Abraham* from the reſt of Mankind, and aſſured him with his Poſterity to himſelf by a particular Covenant, and Promiſe of giving to him the Land of *Canaan*. Upon which account he was worſhipped by *Abraham*, under the Notion of the Author of that Promiſe, by *Iſaac*, as *the God of his Father*, by *Jacob*, as *the God of Abraham*, and *the fear of his Father Iſaac*; by their Deſcendants, till their Deliverance out of *Egypt*, as *the God of Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob*; that is, as the God, who by the Promiſe made to their Forefathers had entailed upon themſelves particular Bleſſings.

After their Deliverance out of *Egypt*, and thoſe many wonders and prodigies wrought in Favour of them, God choſe to be worſhipped by them as the Author of that Deliverance, and uſhers in all his Commands with this Preface: *I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of* Egypt, *out of the houſe of bondage*: And accordingly, he was in all ſucceeding Ages worſhipped by them under that Notion; as appears from the frequent Commemoration of that Benefit in the Old Teſtament, and the

the whole System of the Jewish Religion. In which God challengeth Adoration and Worship from them, not as the Author of their Creation, but of their Deliverance, who had so signally employed his Almighty Power in their Favour, and by the very words of the Covenant, so often repeated, declared himself *to be their God*, and them *to be his People*; whereby he manifestly implyed, that he intended to distinguish them from the rest of Mankind, by the greatness of his Benefits, and to be worshipped by them upon that account. For to all other Men he was a God in the Notion of a Creator, but to them only he was a God in the Notion of a particular Benefactor. Vol. I.

The Memory of these particular Benefits are every where the chief Argument, which he employeth to excite the Jews to his Service, or reduce them to Obedience when gone astray. Thus *Esai* XLI. 8, 9. *But thou Israel art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee.* Could any thing be spoken

Vol. 1. ſpoken more paſſionately, or more effectual to gain the Devotion of that People; whom if the Senſe of being the Servant, the Friend, and the Choſen of God could not perſwade to an exact Obedience, the Dictates of Nature, and common Principles of Reaſon would be little able to over-rule them? Not only doth he own them, in other places, for his choſen People, but, as if for their ſakes he diſclaimed his Relation to the reſt of Mankind, he condeſcends to be in a peculiar manner called their God, as *Eſai* XLIII. 14, 15. *Thus ſaith the Lord your Redeemer, the holy one of Iſrael: I am the Lord, your holy One, the Creator of Iſrael, your King.* In urging the practice of his Commands, he ſeldom makes uſe of his Supream Authority, or Claims Obedience to them any otherwiſe than in Gratitude to thoſe wonderful and ſignal Mercies. Thus *Ezek.* XX. 5, 6, 7. reproving them for their Idolatry, he juſtifies his Law, whereby he had appropriated all Divine Worſhip to himſelf alone, not from the Incommunicativeneſs of his Divine Nature, but from the right which he had acquired by conferring on them thoſe many Benefits.

Thus

Thus ſaith the Lord God, in the day, when I choſe Iſrael, and lifted up my hand unto the ſeed of the houſe of Jacob, and made my ſelf known unto them in the land of Egypt; when I lifted up my hand unto them, ſaying, I am the Lord your God. In the day that I lifted up my hand unto them to bring them forth of the land of Egypt, into a land that I had eſpied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands. Then I ſaid unto them, Caſt ye away every man the abomination of his eyes, and defile not your ſelves with the Idols of Egypt. I am the Lord your God. Vol. I.

To ſay no more, this appears evidently from the name of *JEHOVAH*, under which God was conſtantly worſhipped from the giving of the Law till the coming of Chriſt. For this name imported no more than the Immutability of the Divine Nature, and Conſtancy in effecting his Promiſe; the Completion of which ſhould neceſſarily as often return into their Minds, as that moſt Holy Name was taken into their mouths. And therefore at that moment in which the Promiſes were compleated, God made himſelf known unto the Jews by this name *Jehovah*, ſaying unto *Moſes*, *Exod.* VI. 3. *And*

Vol. I. *I appeared unto Abraham, unto Iſaac and unto Jacob, by the name of* El Shaddai, *or God Almighty, but by my name* Jehovah *was not I known unto them.* As if he ſhould ſay. I was known indeed unto your Forefathers by my Attributes of Greatneſs and Omnipotence, whereby they were intirely ſatisfied, that I was able in due time to conferr upon them all thoſe Benefits, which I had promiſed to them: but my Attributes of Veracity and Immutability were not ſenſibly made known to them by the Completion of thoſe Promiſes. Theſe now you ſee performed, and conſequently are convinced that I am a God, true to my Promiſe, and invariable to my Reſolutions. By this Name, or under this Notion will I be henceforward worſhipped by you.

The exceeding Care, which God took to perpetuate the Memory of theſe Benefits among the Jews, does manifeſt it to have been the beſt means of preſerving Religion, and the true Worſhip of himſelf among them. To this all the Rites and Ceremonies of the Law in ſome meaſure tended, but eſpecially the grand Feſtival of the *Paſſover* was inſtituted for no other Purpoſe, than to continue the remem-

remembrance of their Deliverance out of *Egypt*. Annual repetitions of the Hiſtory of thoſe Benefits were enjoyned, and Parents commanded to teach them to their Children on the ſevereſt Penalties. The greateſt part of the Book of *Deuteronomy* (which was in more frequent uſe among the Jews, than any other Book of the Old Teſtament) is employed in repeating the Favours of God, and urging the Duty of gratitude ariſing from them. And, as if the whole Duty of that People conſiſted in retaining the Memory of thoſe Favours, *Moſes* in one place ſeems to require nothing elſe of them. Who after he had deſcribed the Excellency of that Law and Religion, which God had revealed to them, ſubjoyns, *Only take heed to thy ſelf, and keep thy ſoul diligently, leaſt thou forget the things that thine eyes have ſeen, and leaſt they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy ſons, and thy ſons ſons.* *Deut.* IV. 9. He was ſufficiently aſſured, That if this grateful remembrance were preſerved among them, it would draw along with it an univerſal Obedience to the whole Law. And therefore as our Saviour ſummed up the whole

Vol. I. whole Duty of Man in the Love of God and our Neighbour; ſo he comprized all in a thankful remembrance of the Divine Benefits.

Afterwards, when the deplorable Idolatry of the Jews (for which God cauſed them to be led into Captivity) had almoſt effaced the Memory of their miraculous Deliverance out of *Egypt*; and by a new Prodigy of Mercy, God had brought them out of Captivity, and replaced them in their ancient Poſſeſſions, he tells them, he would not any longer be worſhipped by them, as the Author of that almoſt forgotten Benefit of their Deliverance out of *Egypt*, the Memory of which was grown faint among them; but as the Author of the late Reſtitution, the remembrance of which was yet freſh in their Minds, and might therefore be ſuppoſed to produce a greater Senſe of gratitude in them. For thus he beſpeaks them, *Jerem.* XVI. 14, 15. *Therefore behold the days come, ſaith the Lord, that it ſhall no more be ſaid the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Iſrael out of the land of Egypt. But, the Lord liveth that brought up the children of Iſrael from the land of the North, and from all the lands*

lands whither he had driven them; and I will bring them again into their Land, that I gave unto their fathers. The ſame words he repeats in the XXIII. 7th. and 8th. Verſes. So ſtudiouſly did God indeavour to oblige the Jews to purſue their own Happineſs, in the true Worſhip of him; by heaping new Benefits upon them, and inculcating the Memory of them in all ſolemn Acts of Worſhip. Vol. I.

Under the Goſpel alſo, God continues to be worſhipt as the Author of ſome ſignal Benefits, as *the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, by whom we obtained Redemption from our ſins, and Deliverance out of the ſpiritual *Egypt*, the bondage of Sin and the Devil. In every Act of our Chriſtian Worſhip, the Memory of this Benefit is preſented to us, while we are taught to direct our Prayers to him, and to worſhip him, in the Notion of the *Father*; which cannot be, without recalling to mind his infinite Mercy manifeſted in our Redemption, which was deſigned by him, and effected by his only begotten Son.

All the Sacraments and external Worſhip of the Chriſtian Religion, tend no

leſs

Vol. I. leſs to preſerve the Memory of this Benefit, than did the Rites of the Jewiſh Law to Commemorate their Deliverance out of *Egypt*, particularly the Holy *Euchariſt*; which was intended for the conſtant and moſt ſolemn Act of the Chriſtian Worſhip, was inſtituted to this very Purpoſe, to preſerve a lively Memory of that great and final Act of our Redemption; to repreſent to us the Death of our Saviour, and continue the Memory of thoſe *ſtripes by which we were healed*, and of that *blood, by which we were cleanſed.*

If by the degeneracy of latter Ages, it hath in great meaſure failed to produce that Effect, for which it was at firſt intended, that is to be aſcribed to that deplorable diſuſe of the Celebration of it, which crept into latter Ages, and is continued in our times. That univerſal decay of Religion and Piety, which we all acknowledge and lament, cannot with ſo much Reaſon be attributed to any other cauſe as to this; the Memory of our Savious Paſſion, and with that, of our Redemption, ſenſibly decayed in the minds of Men, when that venerable Myſtery began to be diſcontinued, which was inſtituted on purpoſe to continue

tinue for ever a lively Repreſentation of it in the Church. Men perhaps may retain an Hiſtorical remembrance of that ineſtimable Sacrifice, which was offered on the Croſs; may confeſs and firmly believe that Jeſus Chriſt died for the ſins of Mankind, was buried, and roſe again: But then, I fear, this remembrance will, without the uſe of thoſe Commemorative Rites, which God ordained for our Inſtruction, and the compleat Manifeſtation of thoſe infinite Benefits, become purely *Hiſtorical*, and have little influence upon our Practice; and contribute much leſs to excite that Senſe of Gratitude, which might induce us to reſign up our ſelves to his Will and Direction, who had done and ſuffered ſo great things for us. This is beſt procured by the uſe of thoſe moſt Holy Myſteries, where the Death and Paſſion of our Saviour is in the moſt lively and ſignificant manner repreſented to us; where the benefit of it is in particular applied to every one of us; where every ſingle Communicant may behold the Body of Chriſt broken, and his Blood ſhed for him; and by deſcending into a ſerious Conſideration of it form a right

Vol. I. Judgment of the greatneſs of that Benefit; which will then only appear infinite and tranſcendent to him, when he is convinced that it reacheth to himſelf in particular, and may be productive of his eternal Happineſs. This cannot but raiſe the utmoſt affections of his Soul, and create ſuch a Senſe of Gratitude, as ſhall not eaſily expire, but endeavour to exert it ſelf in all thoſe Actions which ſhall be judged acceptable to ſo great a Benefactor, while the lively Memory of thoſe Benefits continue; which ſhall ever continue, if often repaired, renewed and increaſed by a frequent Participation in that ſolemn Act of their Commemoration.

How great therefore was the prudence of the Apoſtolick and Primitive Times, which repeated that Commemoration every day; and when the increaſe of their number permitted not that, at leaſt every Sunday; and eſteemed every baptized Perſon, who being come to years of Diſcretion, omitted conſtantly to bear a part in it, to have by that Intermiſſion fallen from the Faith, and cut himſelf off from the Church of Chriſt? This produced and

ſecured

ſecured that laſting Gratitude, which ſerved for the grand Motive and Spring of all Chriſtian Vertues, permitted not their Zeal to grow cold, and continued the ſame heat of Devotion among them, as if their *Saviour* had been yet preſent with them. Vol. I.

And ſhall we deplore the decay of Religion in our Age, and the degeneracy from the Spirit of thoſe antient Times; and yet neglect to make uſe of thoſe means, whereby they raiſed and fomented a juſt *Senſe* of their Obligation to God, and therein laid the Foundation of their ſo much celebrated Piety? We are equally convinced of the truth of thoſe Benefits; we no leſs firmly believe that Chriſt died for us than they did; we no leſs paſſionately deſire eternal Happineſs; and have all other means of Inſtruction equally afforded to us. We enjoy the ſame Faculties of Soul and Body, and believe our ſelves to have the ſame innate generous Inclinations of mind; the Grace of God doth no leſs abound to us, and the ſame Rewards do yet attend us. How then comes it to paſs that we cannot equal their Piety and Holineſs, that we fall ſhort of their Zeal and De-

Vol. 1. vction; and come ſo far beneath the Example of thoſe Holy Perſons, that we ſeem to be the Followers of a different Religion, and the Diſciples of another Maſter? This can rationally be aſcribed to no other cauſe, than to the wilful neglect of thoſe Aſſiſtances in the performances of our Duty, which our Saviour bequeathed to us; of which the chief and infinitely greateſt is the frequent Celebration of the Holy Euchariſt, whereby that great Principle of Obedience in revealed Religion, I mean Gratitude, might be produced, kept alive, and receive continual Acceſſion in the Minds of Chriſtians. This, to the no leſs ſcandal, than prejudice of Chriſtianity, hath in latter Ages been fatally neglected and diſcontinued, reduced to ſome few Seaſons and Feſtivals of the year, and then performed by a very inconſiderable part of the Church in her ſeveral Congregations. An abuſe which perhaps cannot be equalled in any Syſtem of Religion which ever obtained in the World; that the Primary and Eſſential Rite of it ſhould be generally omitted by thoſe who pretend to be Diſciples of it.

Juſtly

Juſtly therefore doth it turn to the Honour of the Reformation in general, that it hath in ſome meaſure removed this abuſe; and given occaſion to more frequent and numerous Celebrations of the Holy Euchariſt over all Chriſtendom, which before that time in the Church of *Rome* were by long diſuſe almoſt become unknown. For as for their conſtant private Maſſes, whatſoever may be pretended for their being a Propriatory Sacrifice for the quick and dead, moſt certainly they do not in the leaſt conduce to Commemorate and ſet forth the Death of Chriſt. Juſtly alſo to the Honour of the Church of *England* in particular, which after a lamentable and univerſal diſuſe of theſe Holy Myſteries introduced in the late times of Confuſion both of Church and State, hath happily reſtored the uſe of them, renewed frequent Communions, and enjoys numerous Communicants: May Paſtors and People conſpire to make this excellent Cuſtom become univerſal; that ſo at laſt we may have the Happineſs to ſee this Church equal the Apoſtolick times in Zeal and Piety, as it doth in Purity of Doctrine! Vol. I.

Vol. I. But I return to the profecution of my Text, (although even this conduceth mightily to the Illuſtration of the Argument now in hand) and having ſufficiently manifeſted that Gratitude, or a right Senſe of our Obligation ariſing from the Conſiderations of the infinite Benefits of God, was intended by him to be to us the grand Motive of Obedience to his Laws; I proceed in the Second place, to ſhew, that

II. This is the beſt and moſt effectual Motive, which could be employed for that Purpoſe. Which however it cannot be called in queſtion, ſince as we have already ſhewed, this Motive was before all others choſen by the infallible Wiſdom of God, to lead us to Repentance, and thereby to Salvation; yet I will proceed to demonſtrate the truth of it by theſe following Conſiderations.

Firſt then, if we reſpect the force of Goodneſs in general, and how prevalent the Obligation of Benefits is in its own Nature; we cannot but conclude it to be the moſt effectual of all Arguments. Nothing is ſo amiable and perſwaſive as this Vertue of Beneficence, which carrieth invincible Charms along with it;

it; and maketh greater Conqueſts in the hearts of Men, than all the force and terrour of the World. Other Vertues may create a Veneration, ſome a fear, and others an admiration of the Perfections of the Perſon endued with them; but this alone produceth Love, the moſt active Principle of our Mind. In God there are many Attributes which may confound the apprehenſion of Mankind, as the infinity of his Nature, his Eternity and Omnipreſence; others which may create awful Apprehenſions of him, as his Omnipotence and Omniſcience; and ſome which may produce reverent Conceptions of him, as the perfection of his Wiſdom and Holineſs: but none of all theſe would naturally lead Men to the worſhip of him without the addition of his Goodneſs and Liberality. Without theſe men would eſteem his Worſhip, both unprofitable and unneceſſary; and think themſelves little concerned in the Adoration of him, from whom they neither received, nor expected any Good. Vol. I.

The Benefits indeed of Creation and Conſervation, if Men would duly conſider the Greatneſs of them, were ſufficient to introduce and ſecure the con-

Vol. I. ſtant Worſhip of the Author of them. But ſuch is the Nature of Mankind, that they little conſider thoſe Benefits which are common to them with inanimate Beings, and require to be diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the Creation by a greater proportion of the Divine Favour; as who alone can render Worſhip and Honour to their Creator, and conſerve a Grateful eſteem of their Benefactor. To this we may add, that as it is the Senſe of our own Wants, which chiefly induceth us to look up to God, and make our Addreſſes to him; ſo it is the ſenſible experience of the ſupply of thoſe Wants, which moveth us to return thanks to God, and continueth the remembrance of him in our Minds. Without this it may be juſtly feared, the Worſhip of God would be loſt among Men, and Religion vaniſh into unaccountable Superſtitions.

If we view the ſeveral Religions of the World, we ſhall find that they all worſhipped God on the account of his ſuppoſed Benefits. Inſomuch as the Heathens enjoying no peculiar Benefits of God, worſhipped with Divine Honour thoſe men whom they fancied, when

when alive, to have been their greateſt Benefactors. They did equally partake of the common Benefits of Creation and Conſervation, and as St. *Paul* aſſureth us, *Acts* XVII. 28. acknowledge that *in God they did live, and move, and have their being*: But the want of peculiar Favours conferred on them, occaſioned the loſs of all true Notions, and worſhip of the Deity; not neceſſarily indeed, for then they had not been inexcuſable, but in Conjunction with the depraved Nature of Mankind, which is led more by the Impreſſions of Senſe, than mature Judgment of the Underſtanding; whence being more affected with the viſible Benefits of mortal Men, than the common Benefits of God, (which however infinitely ſurpaſſing the others, yet were not perceived by Senſe) they forgot their Creator; and imagining Beneficence to be the beſt Indication of a Deity, ranked among the Gods their fellow Creatures, from whom they had received ſome extraordinary Benefit. Theſe they worſhipped with the utmoſt Efforts of Piety and Devotion; which however being in them directed to falſe Objects, tended to their Condemnation; Vol. I.

Vol. 1. nation; yet may juſtly make us aſhamed, who incited by infinite Benefits, and allured by ſubſequent Rewards, render not thoſe Duties of Gratitude, to an Object, in its own Nature, worthy of Adoration, which they returned to mortal Men for petty inconſiderable Favours.

They were content even to debaſe their Natures, and ſtoop to the Worſhip of their fellow Creatures, that they might not ſeem to be wanting in returning thanks for ſlight and temporal Obligations: and we can ſcarce be induced by infinite Benefits to pay that Tribute of Adoration to our Creator, which is due to him on many other accounts alſo. For it is our Happineſs, that our Gratitude is directed to the right Object, that it cannot be exceſſive or degenerate into Idolatry or Superſtition, while paid to the true God, who deſerves the moſt profound Subjection and higheſt Adoration from us. Even this is none of the leaſt Benefits, for which we owe unto him the utmoſt tranſport of Gratitude, that he hath been pleaſed to awaken us, and draw us to himſelf by wonderful Acts of bounty; and lay

lay new Obligations upon us leaſt we ſhould forget the old; that he ſhould condeſcend to conquer the Ingratitude of Mankind, by heaping new Benefits upon us, and prepare our Minds to the reception of true Knowledge, by ſtriking our Senſes with amazing Acts of Mercy. Vol. I.

For if we conſider the ſeveral Revelations made by God unto the world; we ſhall find them all to have been preceded by extraordinary Arguments of peculiar Favour to that People unto whom thoſe Revelations were made: which might raiſe their Apprehenſions and induce them to conſider themſelves obliged in Gratitude to pay an intire Obedience to the Dictates of ſo great a Benefactor. Thus God had newly created *Adam*, given him Dominion over all Creatures, and ſeated him in Paradiſe, when he made known to him the Myſtery of the promiſed Seed. He had aſſured *Abraham* to himſelf, by a continued Train of ſtupendious Bleſſings, before he entred into Covenant with him, or required him to manifeſt his Obedience in his Circumciſion. But the Revelation of the Moſaick Law upon Mount *Sina* was the moſt expreſs

Inſtance

Vol. I. Inſtance of this kind; which was not delivered until God had abundantly convinced the Jews of that peculiar Favour which he bore unto them, by working Signs and Miracles in their behalf in *Egypt*, *bringing them out thence with a mighty hand and a ſtretched out arm*, *drowning their enemies in the Red Sea*, *and miraculouſly nouriſhing themſelves in the wilderneſs*. Such amazing Prodigies of particular kindneſs could not but unite them to God their Benefactor, in a firm reſolution of Obedience to his Commands, and convince them of their Obligation to worſhip him; and, amidſt all their moſt groſs Idolatries, force them to acknowledge that God was chiefly to be adored, *Who had brought them out of Egypt*; although their ignorance and proneneſs to Superſtition often betrayed them to worſhip him in a manner unbecoming his Nature, and diſpleaſing to him. Inſomuch that it may be obſerved; that when they committed that foul Apoſtacy related in the XXXII. Chapter of *Exodus*, and worſhipped God under the Repreſentation of a molten Calf; they ſtill forgat not that Benefit, but directed their Worſhip to him chiefly upon that account,

account, saying, *These be thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt*, Ver. 4. Vol. I.

And when the last and most perfect Revelation was made unto the world by our Saviour; the same method of Divine Providence was retained and made use of by him; who in his triennial Preaching preceding his Crucifixion, and final Completion of his Office upon *Earth*, *went about doing good*, healing the Sick, raising the Dead, curing Demoniacks, and restoring the use of their Limbs and Senses to unhappy Persons who before wanted them. These Miracles indeed were likewise intended to demonstrate the Divine Mission of our Saviour, who performed them.

But since the Conformity of the ancient Prophecies concerning the Messias, to his Person, was to the Jews the far greatest Argument of his Divinity; and to the Gentiles, not the Relation of his Miracles, but the performance of other Miracles by the Apostles in Attestation of it; the Primary intention of his own Miracles seems to have been no other, than to raise the attention of the World by the Greatness of them, and excite their Gratitude by their direct Tendency to the

Vol. 1. the benefit of Mankind. For among all the Miracles of Chriſt, not above three or four can be found, which do not immediately reſpect the Cure of the Infirmities, the relief of the Wants, or in general the good of Mankind. And thus it appears both from the Nature of the thing, and the Example of the Divine Oeconomy, that a right Senſe of the Divine Beneficence, is the moſt effectual Motive of Obedience to the Laws of God. But then

Secondly, This will appear more manifeſtly, if we conſider the Nature of the Divine Benefits, how much greater influence they deſervedly Challenge than any others: Benefits ſo truly infinite, and exceeding our comprehenſion, that God might juſtly make that appeal to the whole world, which he doth in the Prophet *Iſaiah*, Chap. V. Ver. 3, 4. *And now O Inhabitants of Jeruſalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my Vineyard. What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it?* So ſtudiouſly hath God endeavoured to procure the Happineſs of Mankind, by all thoſe Obligations which are wont to make impreſſion on it.

Every one of the Divine Benefits may

may Challenge the most exalted Gratitude of our Soul; and affords us Entertainment for Admiration as well as Love. For to omit the common Benefits of Creation, Preservation, and the ordinary Acts of Providence; and the peculiar ones of Redemption and Sanctification, *The means of grace, and the hopes of glory*; I will consider only that mentioned in the words immediately preceding my Text, which the Apostle expresseth by *the riches of his Goodness, forbearance and long suffering*; whereby he winks at the sins of Mankind, while there are any hopes or possibility of Reformation left; prolongeth the Execution of his Judgment; giveth us space for Repentance, and gently leads us to it. A Mercy which might justly alone incline us to conquer the Temptations of the world, and depraved Inclinations of our mind, and henceforward devote our Lives to the Service of God, which having been so often forfeited to his Justice, have been as often remitted by his Mercy. A Vertue which hath been always wont beyond others to win the hearts of Men, and hath antiently procured to the most admired Princes, the Titles of

Fathers

Fathers of their Country, and *the delight of Mankind*. In them it was esteemed the highest degree of Perfection, and to deserve from Posterity the most grateful Acknowledgements, to pardon their conquered Enemies, remit the offences of their Subjects, and defer the execution of Justice until the Criminal should appear incorrigible.

But alas, how mean and inconsiderable are these Acts of Clemency, if compared to the Divine Forbearance and Long-suffering: where the Person offended is of infinite Worth and Dignity, and Author of the most illustrious Benefits; who is able to strike the Sinner dead in a moment, and vindicate the Honour of his Name by a single nod: where the offence is repeated, not once or twice, but very often, perhaps every day and moment, and that by inconsiderable Creatures, who are the work of his hands, the dependants of his Power; and unable to render any Service to him, which may tend to his Interest, or augment his Greatness? We are not ignorant with what transports of Joy, and Resolutions of extreme gratitude, a condemned Person would receive his Princes Pardon

Pardon. And if the ſame affection doth not ſeize us, as often as we view the ſins of our Life, and conſider the offers of Pardon made to us upon condition of Repentance; if we do not with equal Gratitude reſent the remiſſion of every ſingle ſin; we muſt acknowledge it to be no other than the product of a brutiſh ſtupidity, which can be convinced by Senſe, that hainous Offences may forfeit their Lives to the Laws of their Countrey; but will not be convinced by Reaſon, that more hainous ſins do forfeit them to the Divine Juſtice. Vol. I.

But I ſpeak to thoſe who are convinced of the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion; who believe they were created for no other end, than to honour God by Obedience to his Laws; that even by the Law of Nature the Commiſſion of ſin renders us obnoxious to undergo the Divine Vengeance, in whatſoever way that may be inflicted on us; but that by the revealed Law of Chriſtianity, every ſingle ſin in its own Nature ſubjects us to the Divine Wrath, and in that to eternal Puniſhment. How infinitely therefore are we bound to celebrate the Mercy of God, in that he doth not immediately pour

Vol. 1. out his Wrath upon us, but patiently awaits our Repentance; and is not only ready to re-admit us to his Favour; but by an extraordinary Act of loving kindneſs, not to be paralelled in the Actions of Mankind, paſſionately wiſheth that by our Repentance we would capacitate our ſelves to receive his Favour? For thus *Pſalm* LXXXI. 14, 15. he teſtifieth, how delightful it would have been to him to continue his Favours to the Children of *Iſrael*, if their obſtinate perſeverance in ſin had not rendred it incongruous to the Holineſs of his Nature to do it. *O that my people would have hearkened unto me: for if Iſrael had walked in my ways; I ſhould ſoon have put down their enemies, and turned my hand againſt their adverſaries.* And in like manner, *Eſai.* XLVIII. 17, 18. *Thus ſaith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy one of Iſrael, I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou ſhouldeſt go. O that thou hadſt hearkned to my commandments; then peace had been as a river, and thy righteouſneſs as the waves of the ſea.* To name no more Paſſages of this Nature, how paſſionate is that Proteſtation of God, *Ezek.* XXXIII. 11. *As I live ſaith the*

the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live, turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die O ye houſe of Iſrael? This earneſt deſire of God, that by Repentance we would qualifie our ſelves to receive his Mercy, can proceed from no other Principle, than the utmoſt perfection of Clemency and Goodneſs to Mankind; and, beyond all other Arguments, demonſtrates to us the Greatneſs of it; ſince the execution of Juſtice tendeth no leſs to manifeſt the Divine Glory, than Acts of Mercy do. And thus it again appears, that a right Senſe of our Obligation, ariſing from the Divine Benefits, is the moſt effectual Motive of Obedience; ſince his Benefits being infinite and tranſcendent, may reaſonably be expected to produce a ſutable and and not inferiour degree of Gratitude. Vol. I.

But then farther, in Relation to the Divine Benefits, it is to be conſidered, that they are not only great in their own Nature, but alſo wholly undeſerved by us; which contributeth very much to raiſe the eſteem of their Excellency in our Minds, and amplifie the riches of the Divine Beneficence.

Vol. 1. The Pſalmiſt made excellent uſe of this Conſideration, when comparing the unworthineſs of Man, to the Greatneſs of the Divine Favours conferred on him, he cries out in Admiration: *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the ſon of man, that thou ſo regardeſt him?* The Apoſtle uſeth the ſame Argument, Rom. V. 8. *For ſcarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man ſome would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us:* That is, ſcarce would any other confer ſo great a Benefit, as to lay down his Life for his ſake, upon any one, however punctually performing all the Duties of Juſtice, and deficient in none of thoſe Offices which are neceſſarily required of him: Yet perhaps for one, who out of the abundance of his Zeal and Charity, for the good of his Neighbour, doth more than was in common Juſtice required; ſome men, induced by a powerful Senſe of gratitude, would not fear to lay down their Lives.

And in this appeareth the incomparable Greatneſs of the Divine Goodneſs, that while we, far from performing thoſe

those Duties, which in the strictest manner we are obliged to pay to God, much less from doing more than is necessarily required of us, had by our sins provoked the Divine Displeasure, and proclaimed our selves Enemies to God; yet notwithstanding all this, Christ, vouchsafed to die for us. If we apply this Argument to our own Obligation arising from the Divine Benefits, we shall find it very cogent. For if for a good, although not for a just Man, some would, out of Gratitude, even dare to die: What ought not we to do for God, who, by his superabundant Goodness, hath so far exceeded, what he oweth to us in Justice, that the latter holdeth no Proportion to the former? In strict propriety of Speech he oweth nothing to us; Since our Creation is an Act of his own Free-will; and although when once created he cannot without Injustice necessitate us to be miserable, or lay greater evil upon us without respect to our Demerits, than what may be countervailed by the Happiness necessarily flowing from our Existence; yet is this owing rather to the Justice of his own Nature, than to any right acquired by us. But then Vol. I

Vol. I. the undeſerved Benefits beſtowed on us are greater than we are able to conceive, and hold no Proportion with any thing ſave the infinity of his Goodneſs, as being no leſs than Redemption from eternal Death, and the hopes of everlaſting Happineſs.

For what can we plead in behalf of our ſelves to render us worthy of the Divine Favour? Not the Dignity of our Nature, which in his ſight is duſt and aſhes: not the perfections of our Mind, which are the Products of his own Power, and miſerably debaſed by ſinfold Habits: not our Righteouſneſs or Piety, which is infinitely inferiour to our Demerits, and although moſt perfect, yet were no more than our Duty: not the Ability of magnifying the perfections of his Nature, and celebrating his Majeſty; for that is infinite already, and can receive no Addition from our imperfect Praiſes. The Angels were much more fitted by the Excellency of their Nature to perform that Office; as having more noble Conceptions of the Divine Majeſty, and being able, by reaſon of their Spirituality, to ſing Praiſes unto him without intermiſſion: Yet obtained not they

they the ſame Favours with Mankind, nor enjoy the Benefit *of the forbearance and long-ſuffering of God.* For them, after Apoſtacy, he receiveth not to Mercy: But *the Angels which kept not their firſt eſtate, but left their own habitation, he hath reſerved in everlaſting chains under darkneſs unto the judgment of the great day, Jude* VI. It is Man alone, whom God ſeems to have choſen out for the darling of the Creation; and to have tried how far it was poſſible to oblige his Creatures, by undeſerved Benefits, to the Worſhip of him. Vol. I.

This Conſideration cannot but ſtrike our Souls with a lively Senſe of our Obligation to God, that in diſpenſing the riches of his Goodneſs, he weighed not our Merits, but choſe to make known his Power in our weakneſs. A Conſideration which might juſtly find matter of Aſtoniſhment for our whole Lives, and working up our Souls into an Extaſie of gratitude conſtrain us to Obedience. Wiſely therefore did *Moſes* ſo much inculcate it in the IX. of *Deuteronomy*, where aggravating the Greatneſs of the Obligation, which God had laid upon the People of *Iſrael*, by his wonderful and numerous

Vol. I. rous Benefits, he chargeth them to remember withal that they were undeſerved. *Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath caſt out the Canaanites from before thee, ſaying: For my righteouſneſs the Lord hath brought me to poſſeſs this land. Not for thy righteouſneſs, or for the uprightneſs of thy heart doſt thou go to poſſeſs their land, but for the wickedneſs of theſe Nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord ſware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob.* And this is the Second Head, upon the account of which the Divine Benefits ought to appear infinite unto us, and create a proportionable degree of thankfulneſs: Becauſe they are undeſerved by us.

Laſtly, if we conſider the Nature of Mankind, we ſhall eaſily diſcover, that no Argument ſo effectual could be propoſed to us, as this of Gratitude. The greateſt part of Mankind are no otherwiſe moved than by the report of their Senſes, and have not ſo far improved their Reaſon, as to conceive the perfection of the Divine Attributes, without the Aſſiſtance of ſenſible Objects.

jects. These can be no other than the visible and most remarkable effects of the Divine Power and Goodness. By these as Men are chiefly led to the knowledge of a God, so they are perswaded to pay him Worship and Adoration. Vol. I.

To this Purpose no Actions of God are so adapted, as those which declare his Beneficence and Liberality, in which Mankind is peculiarly concerned, and receive the benefit of them. Other Actions indeed might equally manifest his Nature, if seriously reflected on; but these few make the subject of their Meditations. Men seldom consider God any otherwise than in Relation to themselves, and therefore want some extraordinary Benefits to excite their Attention, and entertain their Consideration. These, beyond all other Arguments, make the deepest Impressions on our Imaginations, and therefore continue longest in our Memories. So that if the remembrance of these be once effaced, we may reasonably conclude, all other Arguments of our Duty and Subjection to God, to have been long before forgotten. And accordingly the Scripture frequently expresseth the final

Vol. I. final Apoſtacy of Men from Religion, by their forgetting the Benefits of God. Thus *Judges* II. after it had been ſaid Verſe 7. *That the people ſerved God all the days of Joſhua, and of the Elders who had ſeen all the great works of the Lord, that* he did for *Iſrael*: It is ſubjoyned Verſe 10. That *when all that generation was dead, there aroſe another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Iſrael.* Now ſee the effect of this Forgetfulneſs. It follows in the 11. Verſe. *And the children of Iſrael did evil in the ſight of the Lord, and ſerved Baalim, and forſook the Lord God of their fathers.* And therefore the Pſalmiſt commonly joyneth both together, Oblivion of the Divine Benefits, and diſobedience to his Commands, as *Pſalm.* CVI. 7. *Our Fathers regarded not thy wonders in Egypt, neither kept they thy great goodneſs in remembrance; but were diſobedient at the Sea, even at the Read Sea*; and Verſe 19. *They made a calf in Horeb and worſhipped the molten Image; and they forgat God their Saviour, who had done ſo great things in Egypt*: and *Pſalm* LXXVIII. 11, 12. *They kept not the covenant of God, and would not walk in his law;*

But

But forgat what he had done, and the wonderful works which he had ſhewed for them. Vol. I.

And indeed if the Senſe of the Divine Benefits cannot perſwade us; if an Argument recommended by ſo many great advantages cannot move us; if we be deaf to the obliging words of ſo ſweet a Charmer, and inexorable to all his Invitations; in vain will it be hoped, that other Arguments will have any influence upon us. Other Arguments may be unknown to us, for want of Attention in us, or ſufficient Propoſal to us: But this of Gratitude gaineth entrance in our Wills without requiring any ſtudious Attention, or elaborate Propoſal. So con-natural it ſeems to Mankind that it cannot be rejected, without doing violence to our Wills, and over ruling the natural Propenſion of our Minds. If we hear of any illuſtrious Acts of Beneficence, or Charity conferred even on any third Perſon, from whence we our ſelves reap no advantage; we find our ſelves ſtrongly inclined in favour of the Benefactor, and carried with a ſecret Love towards him. If the Benefit be conferred upon our ſelves, we are even neceſſitated to form

Vol. I. form an Act of Love, and begin to be grateful, before we can make any ſerious reflection on the Benefit.

So obvious is this Argument, ſo perſwaſive in it ſelf, and agreeable to finite Natures, that it fails not to make impreſſion even upon brute Beaſts; who retain a grateful remembrance of their Benefactors, and reward their Benefits by a ſubmiſſive Obedience. Unanſwerably therefore doth God argue in the Prophet *Iſaiah* againſt the ingratitude of his People, *Eſai.* I. 23. *I have nouriſhed and brought up children, and they have rebelled againſt me. The Ox knoweth his owner, and the Aſs his maſters crib: but Iſrael doth not know, my people doth not conſider.* And ſhall Man be leſs grateful to his Creator, than brute Beaſts to their fellow Creatures? Or ſhall we alone of all the Creation be untameable by kindneſs, and refuſe to be mollified by any Favours?

Let us rather conſider how infinite the Love of God is to us, and how great our Obligation depending on it; that when he might have obliged us by the Law of Vaſſallage, by the Right of Creation, and his own ſupreme Power,

Power, to a ſtrict and unſinning Obe- Vol. I.
dience; he hath condeſcended to do
it rather by repeated Demonſtrations of
peculiar kindneſs: That he hath adapt-
ed the Arguments of Obedience to the
weakneſs of our Wills, and imperfec-
tions of our Underſtandings; that he
hath in a manner quitted his other glo-
rious Attributes, of Omniſcience, Om-
nipreſence, Almighty Power, and In-
finite Majeſty, and remitted our Duties
belonging to them; requiring us to con-
ſider him only under the amiable At-
tribute of Goodneſs and Loving-kind-
neſs; and worſhip him no farther,
than as the Emanations of that ſhall
oblige us. If after all this we ſhall
continue impenitent, and fail in our
Returns of Duty to God, we ſhall ren-
der our ſelves inexcuſable to the whole
World; and fall juſt Sacrifices to his
Wrath and Vengeance. We ſhall not
be ſo much as able to plead the force
of any Temptation for the Commiſſion
of ſo monſtrous an ingratitude: Since
God by heaping upon us ſo many al-
luring Benefits, hath more ſtrongly
tempted us to the Obedience of his
Laws, than all the Flatteries and Plea-
ſures of the World can entice us to our

Vol. 1. own Deſtruction. We have no leſs vehement a Propenſity to Love our Benefactors, than to gratifie our Luſts; and if we view the Rewards on one ſide, and Puniſhments on the other; have infinitely more reaſon. And this is ſufficient to prove the *Second* Head propoſed, That the Senſe of our Obligation ariſing from the Divine Benefits, is the moſt effectual Motive of obedience to the Laws of God.

It remains that I conſider the influence of Gratitude upon our Minds, ariſing from the Conſideration *of the forbearance and long-ſuffering of God*, in Relation to the particular Duty of Repentance mentioned in my Text. But ſince the preſent time doth not permit that, I will only in a few words Summ up what I intended to ſay, by way of Application.

Of all the Acts therefore of Divine Mercy, this Forbearance and Long-ſuffering ought leaſt to encourage Men to defer their Repentance and Reformation; ſince it was intended by God to procure an effect directly contrary; to produce that happy Reformation, by giving ſpace for Repentance. If to forget the Divine Benefits be ſo great a Sin,

Sin, how monſtrous and unpardonable a Crime muſt it be, to abuſe them to a quite contrary intent? May we not juſtly take up the words of *Moſes*, *Deut.* XXXII. 6. *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe?* This is ſo manifeſt an Affront to the Nature of God, that an higher Indignity cannot be thought of; to refuſe the offers of Mercy, wilfully neglect the means of Pardon, and therein *do deſpite to the Spirit of Grace.* To pardon ſo notorious an Injury to the Divine Goodneſs is inconſiſtent with the Holineſs of God; and therefore the Apoſtle aſſureth us in the Verſe following the Text, That *the deſpiſers of this mercy treaſure up to themſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* Vol. I.

Let us remember, that by wilfully deferring our Repentance we add to the number of our former Sins, and, which is infinitely more, render them finally unpardonable, by forfeiting our Claim to that Mercy, from whence alone Pardon was to be expected: That hereby we bid defiance to the Divine Juſtice, and provoke God to the Execution of it upon our ſelves; and then that

Vol. I. that nothing is ſo terrible as an abuſed Mercy, and a ſlighted Goodneſs. *You only*, ſaith God to the Jews in the Prophet *Amos* (*chap.* III. *ver.* 2.) *Have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will puniſh you for all your iniquities.* So unpardonable is the neglect of Proficiency under the means of Grace. Whereas if we be induced by a Senſe of Gratitude to Repentance; we have this Comfort, that our Repentance is placed upon the beſt Foundation, the Love of God, whence ariſeth that true Contrition which God hath promiſed not to deſpiſe.

And then how much more noble is it, how more becoming the Excellency of our Nature and Religion, to perform our Duty to God, rather out of the Senſe of our Obligations to him, than the fear of Puniſhment, or the hope of Reward? In the firſt Caſe, the chief Principle of all our Actions will be the Love of God, in the latter the Love of our ſelves: By this we may become the Clients, but by that the Friends of God.

Laſtly, Let us remember, that this Forbearance and Long-ſuffering of God will not endure for ever, that if deſpiſed it ſhall be withdrawn from us; and that God

God hath ſet a time for Repentance, beyond which he will not await, nor ſuffer his Goodneſs to be abuſed. For we muſt not aſcribe to God ſuch an unlimited Exerciſe of Mercy, as may deſtroy his Juſtice, and include the higheſt Contradictions of Sinners, and pardon Offences committed againſt plain Conviction of Conſcience, and in open Contempt of all means of Repentance afforded to them. To paſs by ſuch enormous Sins would ſavour of a Childiſh Fondneſs, debaſe the Majeſty of God, and, by making him irrational, deſtroy his Nature. *How ſhall I pardon thee for this?* ſaith God in the Prophet *Jeremy*, V. 8, 9. *Shall not I viſit for theſe things, and ſhall not my Soul be avenged on ſuch a Nation as this?* God hath appointed his Mercy as a refuge to Mankind for Sins of ignorance, Paſſion and Inadvertency; not as a Sanctuary to prophane and incorrigible Sinners. *He winked indeed at the times of ignorance, but now commandeth all men every where to repent. If a man will not turn, he will whet his ſword, Pſal.* VII. 13. And then the dreadful conſequence of his anger himſelf tells us, *Deut.* XXXII. 40, 41. *For I lift up my hand to heaven, and ſay I live for ever.* Vol. 1.

Vol. I. *If I whet my glittering ſword, and mine hand take hold of judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me.* Let us therefore perfect our Repentance, while a ſpace is yet open for us, before Mercy return to Judgment, and the Door be ſhut upon us; that ſo we alſo may partake of the *goodneſs, forbearance, and long-ſuffering of* God, and not fall into their Condemnation, *who deſpiſe the riches of them. Whoſo is wiſe, will ponder theſe things; and they ſhall underſtand the loving kindneſs of the Lord.*

The

The Sixth SERMON.

PREACH'D

December 30. 1688.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

1 Cor. I. 23.

We preach Chriſt crucified, unto the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and unto the Greeks fooliſhneſs.

THE coming of the Meſſias into the world, and therewith the Manifeſtation of the Divine Mercy to loſt Mankind, which we at this time Commemorate, was ſo ſignal a Benefit, and in all reſpects ſo infinite, that it cannot but adminiſter Matter of Admiration to us, to ſee it rejected, derided and oppoſed, by the greateſt part of Mankind. It may juſtly ſeem ſtrange to us, that that which was propoſed by God to reſcue Men from that fatal Ignorance, wherein they were in-

Vol. I. volved, ſhould be treated with Scorn become *a Stumbling-block*, and be accounted *Folly*. That *the glad tidings of great joy* to Men, ſhould be made a Matter of Deriſion, and be received not with Thankfulneſs, as it deſerved, but with Scofs and Contumelies.

But ſuch is the unhappineſs of Mankind, ever ſince the Fall of *Adam*, that their Underſtandings being darkned with Ignorance, as well as their Wills corrupted with Paſſions and inordinate Deſires; it hath been equally difficult, without the Aſſiſtance of Revelation, to find out the Truth, as to purſue the Dictates of it, when once diſcovered. Such is the natural conſequence of that unhappy Fall, and ſuch have been the Effects of it in all Ages.

But then, whereas the Corruptions of the Will could not be denied or diſſembled, the Senſe of which induced Men to ſeek Remedies for them; the failings of the Underſtanding were ſo far from being perceived and acknowledged, that a great part of Mankind had flattered themſelves into an Opinion of a perfect knowledge, and believed the Truth not only to be poſſeſſed by them, but their own Underſtandings to be the rule

rule and measure of it. They had framed to themselves a System of Religion; either from their own vain Imaginations, or some precedent mistaken Revelation; and being pre-possessed with Notions derived from thence, refused to hearken to any Doctrine different from them. They falsely imagined their own Conceptions to be infallible; and thereby treated the Christian Religion, which opposed them, as an erroneous and ridiculous Doctrine; especially being proposed with that unaffected Simplicity, to which themselves were so much strangers; as believing every Opinion to be so much Divine, by how much more it was more refined, and placed beyond the common Apprehensions of Men. Vol. I.

Whereas the Christian Doctrine was more humane and easie, lay level with the Capacity of the meanest Persons, and excluded not the most illiterate from a perfect knowledge of it; being an Enemy to Pride and Ostentation, devoid of Subtilties, and unuseful Niceties, and resembling the Nakedness as well as the Purity of Paradise; withal teaching such Mysteries, as might directly contribute to

Vol. 1. deſtroy the Pride of ſuch men, not only by oppoſing their Opinions; but alſo teaching the Myſtery of God Incarnate, therein *humbling himſelf* to take upon him an humane State, living a mean and obſcure Life, and at laſt undergoing *the ſhame of the Croſs*; a Myſtery which at once intirely ruined both the carnal and ſpiritual Pride of the World.

The Simplicity of the Chriſtian Religion, its want of all thoſe external pompous Arguments of Subtilty and miſtaken Learning, which recommended other Syſtems, together with its oppoſition to the received falſe Opinions of men, had induced ſome Chriſtians at *Corinth*, who lived among the learned Philoſophers of the Heathens, and Doctors of the Jewiſh Law, to doubt of the Truth of it; others to refine it into a Syſtem of myſterious and ſubtil Niceties; and ſo hindred many from becoming Chriſtians.

The Apoſtle therefore in this Chapter argueth againſt all theſe Men, and in the 17th. Verſe, oppoſeth to theſe new Refiners of Chriſtianity, his own Example; who had preached the Goſpel among them without any affected ſhew

of

of Eloquence; with a Simplicity becoming the Majesty, and agreeable to the intention of the Lawgiver, *Not with Wisdom of Words, least the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect*, and fail of its Design: as it would most certainly do, if proposed according to the Fancies of those men, who turned it into a System of difficult and elaborate Contemplation. For hereby it would exceed the reach and capacity of the greater part of Mankind; whereas it was indifferently intended for the benefit of all. And it would want that powerful Confirmation of the truth of it, that being proposed in a plain and familiar way by mean and unlearned Persons, It notwithstanding surmounted the pompous Learning of the Schools and Synagogues, and gained a more universal Reception in the world. That therefore as God had chose to contrive the Redemption of Mankind in a way very different from their Conceptions; so he had chose to reveal the Mystery of it in a method contrary to that which they used in the Propagation of their several Sects: which occasioned *the preaching of the Cross to be accounted foolishness*, Verse 18. Vol. I.

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Although, if Men would have laid aſide their unjuſt Prejudices, they had ſufficient reaſon to be convinced of the Reaſonableneſs of this proceeding. The truth of this the Apoſtle manifeſteth, not only by appealing to the Conſcience of thoſe who were perſwaded of it, and the ſecret Effects of that perſwaſion in the minds of Men; *but unto us which are ſaved, it is the power of God*; but alſo by other external Arguments, which, by any conſidering Man, cannot be rejected. As, that it was foretold by the antient Prophets, particularly by *Iſaiah* in XXIX. Chapter, Verſe 4. *For it is* there *written*; *I will deſtroy the wiſdom of the Wiſe, and will bring to nothing the underſtanding of the prudent*; that it is abundantly juſtified by its admirable Succeſs in the world, to have been the beſt and moſt wiſe manner of proceeding, being entertained by great numbers of Perſons, and going on apace in procuring its deſigned end, the Reformation and inſtruction of Mankind; whereas the Philoſophy of the Gentiles, and the elaborate Interpretations of the Moſaick Law, made by the great Doctors of it, gained no conſiderable Progreſs in the world; and being confined

confined to ſome ſmall number of Sectaries and Diſciples only, manifeſted by their Unſucceſsfulneſs, that they were never deſigned by the infallible Wiſdom of God for the univerſal Diſcipline or Religion of Mankind. *Where therefore is the wiſe?* as the Apoſtle triumphantly upbraids them, Ver. 20. *Where is the ſcribe? where is the diſputer of this world*, who after all their laborious Searches miſſed of the Truth, and could never propagate their Doctrines with Succeſs? *Hath not God made fooliſh the Wiſdom of this world*, Baffling all the elaborate Schemes of theſe opinionated Men, and confounding their glorious Pretences of Wiſdom; in appointing a quite different method for procuring the Happineſs of Mankind from what they had imagined; and propoſing it Succeſsfully by means, in their Eſteem, Contemptible, by Perſons illiterate, and devoid of all Philoſophy and curious Learning? Vol. 1.

And that we may not conceive this way of procedure, to be either unjuſt or unreaſonable; the Apoſtle proceeds in the 21. Verſe to declare the Reaſon and Occaſion of it. *For after that in the Wiſdom of God, the world by Wiſdom knew*

Vol. I. *knew not God; it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* Since these Persons, who had conceived so great an Opinion of their own Wisdom, had apparently failed of discovering, by the light of Reason, the true God, and the natural Duties of Religion owing to him, however very easie and possible to them; no wonder that the Mysteries of a revealed Religion should appear Foolishness to them; and that God should as it were by way of Punishment confound their Arrogance, and mortifie their Self conceit, by instructing and saving Mankind by a way directly contrary to their Suppositions, namely by Preaching, that is, by supernatural Revelation, not by their own proper Industry and Wit; and *by the foolishness of preaching*; and that considered in the matter of the Revelations, which having nothing of extraordinary Abstraction or difficult Contemplation in them, were in their Judgment accounted foolish; or in the manner of proposing these Revelations, which being different from their fond Conceptions, appeared foolish and absurd to them; *the Jews requiring a sign*, that is, the constant performance of glorious

glorious and pompous Miracles, which might ſecure to them the Fruition and increaſe of that temporal Felicity, which they vainly hoped to receive from the Meſſias: *And the Greeks ſeeking after Wiſdom*, deſpiſing all Doctrines, which were not recommended with the ſpecious ſhew of Philoſophical Subtilty, and Myſterious Niceties, or not propoſed by Perſons, in the Opinion of the world, Learned or Eloquent. Vol. I.

After all theſe preliminary Arguments, the Apoſtle having thereby cleared the way, and removed all Objections, lays down this Concluſion in the words of my Text: *But we preach Chriſt crucified, unto the Jews a ſtumbling block, and unto the Gentiles fooliſhneſs*: That is, we juſtly, and we boldly do it, neither valuing the Deriſion of the world, nor diſtruſting the Juſtice of our Cauſe. So then, the words thus opened, naturally and eaſily offer to us theſe two Conſiderations; of which I ſhall in order Diſcourſe.

I. The Reaſonableneſs or juſt cauſe of believing, and profeſſing the Chriſtian Faith, notwithſtanding its being *a ſtumbling block to the Jews, and to the Gentiles fooliſhneſs.*

II. Our

Vol. I. II. Our Obligation to Preach and openly profeſs this Faith, without being offended with the Contradiction and Oppoſition of the Jews and Gentiles; or being led away with the ſame Prejudices.

I. That we have reaſonable and juſt Cauſe to believe and adhere to the Chriſtian Faith, or the Myſtery of *Chriſt Crucified*, notwithſtanding the deriſion of the Gentiles, and ſcandal of the Jews.

For that by the phraſe of *Chriſt Crucified*, is not ſo much meant, the particular Myſtery of the Death and Paſſion of our Saviour, as the whole Syſtem of Faith revealed by Chriſt, is manifeſt from the Context; although the Crucifixion of our Lord, as it is the grand Myſtery of our Faith, ſo was it of all others to the Jews moſt ſcandalous, and to the Gentiles moſt ridiculous. But the deſign of the Apoſtle being to vindicate the Chriſtian Religion in general, not this Myſtery in particular; I ſhall cloſe with his Deſign; and conſider only the more general Prejudices and Objections, upon account of which the Faith became a ſcandal to the *Jews*, and folly to the *Gentiles*;

Gentiles; that so by manifesting the unreasonableness and inconclusiveness of them, I may manifest the Justice and Reasonableness of our Belief, notwithstanding their Opposition. These Prejudices and Objections we before observed from the Apostles Discourse preceding my Text; and they concern either, Vol. I.

1. The matter of those Revelations, which are the Object of the Christian Faith: Or,

2. The manner of revealing them, and proposing them to the World.

In Relation to the first; the Spirituality of the Christian Religion was a mighty Objection to the Jews, which they could not easily overcome: they being inured to gross and corporeal Conceptions of Divine Matters; trained up in carnal Ceremonies and Ordinances; expecting no other than temporal Rewards, and vainly expecting the glorious appearance of a temporal Messias. Then as to the manner of the Revelation, nothing could be more surprizing to the Jews, than to see it performed in an humble and gentle manner, not with the voice of Thunder and Lightnings, as the Law of Old at Mount

Vol. I. Mount *Sina*; not by force of Arms or victorious Succeſs of the Meſſias; not by ſtupendious Miracles performed as often as the petulancy of a Stiff-necked People ſhould require it; nor yet by the Learning and Cunning of their great Doctors and Rabbies; but by a few mean, inconſiderable, diſarmed, and unlearned Perſons: who ſet upon the work without any Preparation of Learning or Intereſt; proceeded in it with quiet and ſimplicity; and in treating with the Jews choſe rather to convince the Judgment, than amaze their Senſes: rather to argue from the Agreement of the antient Prophecies concerning the Meſſias to the Perſon of our Saviour, than from the Performance of wonderful Miracles; although thoſe were not wanting upon juſt occaſions.

Such were the Prejudices conceived by the Jews againſt Chriſtianity, which occaſioned and continued their Illuſion. They knew very well that ſuper-natural Revelation was the ordinary means, by which Man ſhould arrive to Happineſs; that it was agreeable to the Majeſty, and former Revelations of God, to propoſe Matters of Belief and Practice not exceeding the capacity of the meaneſt

meaneſt Perſons: and thus far they proceeded in the right way; but then the aforementioned Prejudices were a ſtumbling-block in their way, which occaſioned their Fall, and hindred any farther Progreſs. Vol. I.

The Gentile Philoſophers (for againſt them, and not the more unlearned ſort of Heathens, the Apoſtle here argues,) conceived yet deeper Prejudices againſt Chriſtianity, accounting it *Fooliſhneſs*, and deriding the whole Deſign of it. They were puffed up with an Opinion of their own perfect knowledge, or at leaſt Ability to obtain the perfection of it; believing it therefore unneceſſary for God to reveal the Truth to them, which they could diſcover by their own Wit and Induſtry. Or if God ſhould put himſelf to this unneceſſary trouble, they vainly ſuppoſed, that no Perſons were ſo fit to be employed in it as themſelves, who were indued with extraordinary Aſſiſtances of acquired Learning: Or at leaſt not the Apoſtles of all Men, who confeſſed themſelves to be unacquainted with Secular Learning, and appeared ſo to be; and which mightily added to their Prejudice, were by Birth and Education *Barbarians*; whom

Vol. I. whom the Greeks were wont to treat as the moſt vile and contemptible part of the Creation, devoid of Reaſon, and not much Superiour to Brutes. And then as to the Revelation it ſelf: the Chriſtian Religion ſeemed to them to be naked and homely, and which they accounted a great indecency, fitted for the Reception of all Men, not the Contemplation of themſelves only; as not conſiſting of abſtruſe Myſteries, and ſubtil Diſtinctions, which by their Intricacy and Difficulty might Intitle themſelves to Sublimity and a Divine Original; but made up of eaſie, natural and unaffected Truths, equally obvious to the underſtanding of all Men, equally concerning all, and diſpenſing the Knowledge of her Myſteries to all.

Such were the Reaſons, and ſuch were the Prejudices, which cauſed the Chriſtian Religion to become a Scandal to the Jews, and Folly to the Greeks. To theſe the Apoſtle giveth one general Anſwer in the 25. *Verſe. Becauſe the fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than men; and the weakneſs of God is ſtronger than men.* An Anſwer which invincibly overthrows the Plea of theſe Oppoſer of Chriſtianity, as who proceeded upon an

an arrogant Opinion of their Knowledge and Comprehenſion; whereas the experience of many Ages might have convinced them, how unſucceſsfully Mankind hath ever endeavoured to obtain the knowledge of Divine Matters by its own Power. Matters of Natural Religion were almoſt univerſally miſtaken; and how ſhould we hope that the Myſteries of a Revealed Religion can be fully diſcovered by us? We all find in our ſelves the defects of knowledge; we acknowledge our Errours by changing our Opinions daily; and may diſcover the imperfection of our Underſtandings even from the increaſe of Knowledge; for every Degree added to it manifeſteth a precedent Degree of Ignorance, and that ſomewhat was ſtill wanting to render our Knowledge compleat. So difficult, nay even impoſſible is it, for Man to diſcover the Counſels of God in Relation to himſelf, or to paſs a Judgment on them. He may eaſily perceive indeed whether any thing, which pretends to carry that Sacred ſtamp, be contrary to Senſe and includeth a Contradiction, and may thence certainly conclude it to be falſe and counterfeit; but may Vol. 1.

Vol. 1. not by any means be admitted to judge of the Conveniency or Inconveniency of the Divine Diſpenſations: This is too high a Preſumption, and intrencheth upon the Majeſty of God; who being of infinite Wiſdom, knoweth always what is moſt convenient; and knowing it doth effect it.

It is no hard matter to put plauſible Colours upon this or that Model of Religion, recommend it with abundant Arguments, and pompouſly deſcribe the Convenience of it. But as the Apoſtle aſſureth us, 1. *Cor.* III. 19. *The wiſdom of this world is fooliſhneſs with God*, or in compariſon of his greater and infinite Wiſdom, who ſeeth all things and their Tendency or Subſervience to procure the end he deſigneth; ſo that to be taught or commanded by him, is the moſt certain Argument of convenience which can be propoſed.

Not only doth the Excellency of the Chriſtian Religion in general, appear from this Argument; the Reaſonableneſs of the whole Deſign and Revelation of it in thoſe matters, which are before objected againſt, is no leſs manifeſt.

For firſt, as to the Spirituality of it, this

this is ſo far from prejudicing the truth of it, that if juſtly conſidered, it ought rather to recommend it to the Reception of all conſidering Perſons; being the moſt expreſs Character of Divinity, which can be conferred on any *Syſtem* of Religion whatſoever: as bearing thereby a greater reſemblance to God the Author and Object of it. This the Jews themſelves did not deny; only they pretended that this ſpiritual Worſhip oppoſed their own more groſs and corporeal Worſhip, which was acknowledged on both ſides to have been revealed by God; and defeated their hopes of a promiſed Meſſias, whom they expected would deliver them from the Slavery of other Nations, and by force of Arms ſettle them in a quiet and perpetual Poſſeſſion of all temporal Happineſs. It ſeemed to them abſurd, that the glorious *Meſſias ſhould live* an obſcure, deſpiſed, and ignominious Life, and at laſt die a ſhameful and a painful Death. An Errour indeed into which the Genius of their Religion, depending upon temporal Promiſes and Rewards, did almoſt naturally lead them; but which might eaſily have been diſcovered, if they Vol. I.

Vol. I. would have wiſely conſidered either the Nature of God, or Condition of Man.

From the firſt they might eaſily be convinced, that a ſpiritual way of Worſhip was far more noble, pleaſing, and agreeable to the Divine Nature. And if their former Religion induced them to different Sentiments, God had taken abundant Care to prevent their miſtake, by frequent foretelling to them in the Prophets his intention of changing their Religion, diſ-burthening them of the impoſition of their Rites and Ceremonies, and refining it into a ſpiritual Worſhip; by deſcribing the Condition and Office of the Meſſias, That he ſhould be *a man of ſorrows, acquainted with grief; bear the ſins of the people, heal them by his ſtripes, and be reckoned among the Tranſgreſſours.*

Then as to the Nature of the thing it ſelf; it was no other than a childiſh Fancy, to imagine that Pomp and Grandeur, Riches and Majeſty did more become the Meſſias, than Humility and Affliction; Poverty and Contempt, being things in their own Nature indifferent, and of no Eſteem any otherwiſe than in reſpect to their con-

conducement to ſome better end; Which in the Meſſias was the Inſtruction of the world, and the Reconciliation of it by his Death to his offended Father. To the latter, Contempt, Affliction, and Suffering, were abſolutely neceſſary: And to the former highly convenient. For ſince our Lord was not only to reform the Errours of Mankind by his infallible Doctrine, and attone for the Sins of it by his Paſſion; but alſo to deliver to us a moſt compleat Pattern of Vertue and Holineſs in his own Perſon; it was highly expedient, that he ſhould ſuffer all the Calamities incident to humane Nature, that ſo he might teach Men, by his own Example, patiently to endure Affliction, undergo Poverty with Contentment, and not be affrighted by the terrour of Death from the performance of their Duty. No perſwaſion was neceſſary to induce Men to admit Riches, Pleaſures and Proſperity; but to ſuffer all the Miſeries of this World with a generous and unrepining Mind, nothing leſs than the Example of God incarnate could perſwade them. Vol. 1

The manner wherein God choſe to reveal the Goſpel, might perhaps ſeem

Vol. I. ſtrange to the Jews, as being different from that wherein the Law was revealed on Mount *Sina*: but far from appearing incredible, ought rather to have ſeemed more congruous to the Nature of God; certainly more agreeable to the Nature of the things revealed; which being Matters of the higheſt Bounty and Clemency to Mankind, required not to be revealed in ſuch a terrible manner as the Law, which was employed rather in denouncing the Judgments than the Mercies of God; but in a manner, which by the ſweetneſs of it might declare the Clemency and Loving kindneſs of its Author.

It can be no other than a brutiſh Stupidity, not to be raiſed to the knowledge of God any otherwiſe than by the Effects of his Power and Juſtice; as if Acts of Mercy did not equally declare his Nature, and lay a far greater Obligation of Obedience upon us: Or if Acts of Power muſt be employed, as indeed they are highly neceſſary; in the ſecond place, they were far more numerous and wonderful in the Revelation of the Goſpel, than of the Law; not ſo amazing, but more Divine; not ſo terrible, but more illuſtrious. The Jews

Jews indeed were wont to require a Sign as the laſt Proof of the Chriſtian Faith; which, ſince it is apparent, that Miracles were frequently wrought by the Apoſtles in Confirmation of the Faith, can be underſtood of no other, than either that great and final Miracle, which they vainly expected from the Meſſias, the Reſtitution of their Nation to its temporal Happineſs; or performing a Miracle as often as every ſingle Perſon ſhould deſire it, for eſtabliſhing the Truth of Chriſtianity; Or elſe relying more upon Miracles than the Teſtimony of the antient Prophecies concerning Chriſt, and never urging their Authority to the Jews without ſome concomitant Miracle. In whetherſoever of theſe Senſes the Jews were wont obſtinately to require a Sign of the Apoſtles; nothing could be more unreaſonable or impertinent. Vol. I.

For would it not be unworthy the Majeſty of God, to violate the ordinary Courſe of Nature to gratifie either a falſe Opinion, or a fond Deſire? The Reſtitution of Liberty was never promiſed from the Meſſias to the Jews, and therefore was in vain expected from him. The Prophecies were ſuffi-

Vol. 1. ciently clear, and needed not the concurrent Teſtimony of conſtant Miracles: and to gratifie the idle Curioſity of every petulent Humour, by working Miracles as often as ſhould be required, would be ſuch a trifling Extravagance, as would more effectually deſtroy the Authority of ſuch a Lawgiver, than all his Miracles would confirm it. Or if a conſtant uniform Miracle attending the Publication of Chriſtianity, would ſatisfie ſuch Men, as ſurely it ought to do, they may diſcover one in that very Circumſtance which they uſe to inforce their Objection; namely, that it was Succeſsfully propagated in the World by ignorant and illiterate Perſons, who could neither impoſe upon Mankind by the Crafty Artifice of Rhetorick or Inſinuation, nor delude them by the Authority of their Names; a Circumſtance which unanſwerably argueth a Divine Power and Aſſiſtance to have attended the firſt Preachers of the Goſpel, and affected the Minds of their Auditors.

And then, what greater Argument can we deſire of the Wiſdom of God in contriving and uſing this Method, than thoſe illuſtrious Advantages which it adminiſtred to the deſigned End, the Con-

Converſion of the World, and the Glory of God? For not only might the wonderful Succeſs of it, in all parts, even of the learned World, wrought by ſuch weak and contemptible means, convince all ſober Perſons of ſomewhat more than humane directing the Conduct of it; but alſo this method admirably conduced to ſecure the Honour of God, and deſtroy the Pride and Ambition of Men; who if they had been qualified for ſuch an Office by acquired Learning, would have been apt to have aſcribed their knowledge of Divine Matters to their own Sagacity, not the Gift of God; and intitled all the Glory of Succeſs to their own Prudence, not the Divine Power: and further, might have induced Men to have attributed the Succeſs of Chriſtianity to the Sophiſtry and Inſinuation of its Teachers, not the Power of that Truth, which accompanied it, and the Providence of that God, who founded it. Vol. I.

Thus we have anſwered the Prejudices of the Jews, and by ſhewing the Wiſdom of God in employing unlearned Perſons, defeated a like Objection of the Heathen Philoſophers. But then, what the Jews admitted, that Supernatural

Vol. I. natural Revelations were both convenient and neceſſary to the Salvation of Mankind; theſe Men deny, truſting to the ſuppoſed Excellency of their own Learning, and imagining themſelves able by the ſole light of Reaſon to attain the higheſt Perfection of ſpiritual Knowledge; herein putting themſelves into a worſe Condition than thoſe whom they treat with ſo much Scorn, Idiots and Barbarians. For theſe are ſenſible of the failures of their own Underſtanding, and therefore willingly admit a Remedy: whereas thoſe diſowning all Diſeaſe, neglect the Cure of it. Surely no great Reaſon is required to confute theſe Men.

For is it unworthy the Mercy of God to aſſiſt the Soul of Man by ſupernatural Revelations, even although it might, (although not without great Difficulty,) attain to the knowledge of all things neceſſary? This none will ſay. Or is it unbefitting the Goodneſs of God to provide for the Inſtruction of unlearned Perſons by Revelation, although moſt learned Men may not want it? This cannot be doubted. Or if a Revelation muſt be made, could it be done in any more prudent and rational

tional manner, than was Chriſtianity? This none will affirm. So then the extraordinary Revelation of Divine Truths is conſiſtent with the Majeſty of God and Reaſon of Man; and the neceſſity of it to all Perſons without Diſtinction, the moſt learned as well as ignorant, is no leſs apparent. Vol. I.

For however theſe Philoſophers might pleaſe themſelves with the falſe Opinion of a perfect Knowledge, it is too notorious that their Pretences were vain and trifling. They profeſſed indeed a Science of Divine Matters, but ſuch as included only unuſeful, and oftimes abſurd, Notions; which were as various as their ſeveral Sects, and thoſe as numerous as the Whimſies of ambitious Men; and all derided by a powerful and learned Sect, which denied any truth to be in things. Or if any of them entertained right Notions of a Deity and Religion, yet was it rather by way of Conjecture, than Certainty, which therefore had no influence upon their Lives, nor afforded any other hopes of a future State, than what were founded only on faint Wiſhes and uncertain Deſires; ſuch as would never induce them to forego their Lives, or any

Vol. I. any part of their temporal Happineſs, rather than renounce it; or give them intire aſſurance of any Reward or Puniſhment in another Life.

If to pretend that Revelation is unneceſſary and unuſeful to them, was frivolous and irrational in theſe Heathen Philoſophers; much more abſurd was it to arraign the Chriſtian Religion of its ſimplicity, which fitted it for the Reception of all the members of Mankind, not appropriating it to the Benefit of Philoſophers only, by propoſing abſtruſe Contemplations and nice Subtilties, beyond the ordinary reach of unlearned Perſons. This was the chief Reaſon why Chriſtianity was by them accounted Folly, as being hereby become the Portion of reputed Fools, as well as the Science of thoſe, who flattered themſelves with the Title of Wiſdom. And this is none of the leaſt Reaſons why we ought to eſteem it the moſt excellent of all Religions, and condemn the intolerable Pride and Superciliouſneſs of ſuch Men, who either then did endeavour to engroſs the Knowledge of Divine Matters, or now do true Belief and Salvation, to themſelves only.

Religion

Religion was intended by God to procure the Happineſs of the whole Race of Mankind, not of any Sect or Denomination of Men, much leſs of a ſmall inconſiderable Party, who, by appropriating to themſelves the greateſt Bleſſings of Heaven, make themſelves unworthy of the leaſt of them. Nothing therefore contributes ſo much to declare the Mercy of God, or is ſo befitting the Holineſs and Beneficence of his Nature, as the generous Spirit of the Chriſtian Religion, which equally admitteth all Men, and acknowledgeth no other diſtinction in Perſons, than what ariſeth from their more or leſs perfect Obedience to the Law of God. To this end it is admirably fitted by the Simplicity of it, impoſing no neceſſary Duties of Life and Converſation, but what are commanded even by the Law of Nature, and obſerving no other Sacraments or Ceremonies, than what are eaſie and ſignificant, few and inſtructive. And if this muſt be accounted a Prejudice againſt the Truth of Chriſtianity, to what a deplorable Condition hath the Reaſon of Mankind degenerated, diſliking Divine Truths becauſe rational, plain and obvious? Vol. I.

It

Vol. 1. It hath indeed been a common miſtake to deſpiſe all Doctrines recommended with theſe excellent Qualities, and becauſe lying level with the Capacity of the unlearned multitude; and to pronounce them fooliſh as the Greek Philoſophers in the Text accounted the Goſpel to be *Fooliſhneſs*; becauſe of its Simplicity. But this is ſuch a Prejudice, as nothing leſs than the moſt invincible Ignorance of the Nature of Truth and Religion can excuſe. A miſtake however, to which the corrupted Inclination of humane Nature is ſo prone, that it hath not only affected the Greek Philoſophers, but alſo great numbers of Chriſtians in all Ages; who diſdaining the Profeſſion of a ſimple and eaſie Religion, either added abſtruſe and ſometimes incredible Articles to it; or turned it into an artificial Science, involved in the moſt perplex and intricate Subtilties; or affected to propoſe and deliver it in an Enthuſiaſtick ſtile, in wild and undigeſted Conceptions.

It remains that I conſider our Obligation, notwithſtanding all theſe Objections, and the Scandals derived from them, to believe and openly to profeſs the Faith of Chriſt. For however it be

be *to the Jews a Stumbling-block; and to the Greeks foolishness, we* still *preach Christ crucified*; and as it appears from what hath been said, have Reason so to do; being neither scandalized at the Contradiction and Opposition of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, nor deluded by the same Prejudices with them: Which two Heads I will briefly speak to. Vol. 1.

First then, If the Christian Religion be *to the Jews a Stumbling-block, and to the Greeks Foolishness*; if a great part of the World continue not only in Ignorance of it, but in Opposition to it; if the Mysteries of it appear to some incredible, and the manner proposing it ridiculous; this ought not to scandalize us, or induce us to believe the Truth of our Religion, to be either less plain or less certain. We all know Mankind to be subject to Errour, and experience the weakness of humane Understanding. We cannot be ignorant how prone all Men are to follow the direction of their Lusts and Passions; and then if we consider that Christianity opposeth and restraineth these unruly Passions, we shall cease to wonder at its Rejection and Contradiction.

God

Vol. I. God hath indeed ſet his revealed Truths in as clear a light, as is ſufficient for the Conviction of men; but ſtill leaveth our Will in its full Liberty to embrace or reject them; that ſo he may leave place either for Reward of Belief, or Puniſhment of the contrary. Not that God requireth us to believe any thing incredible or extraordinary; not that we merit any thing at the hands of God by being more credulous than the reſt of Mankind, or believing thoſe things which other Men reject as fooliſh or monſtrous. Our Faith is no otherwiſe capable of a Reward, than as it is juſt and rational, as it is the reſult of the right Exerciſe of our Faculties, and a Demonſtration of readineſs to obey the Will of God, and acknowledge his Attributes of Veracity and Dominion over us. It was therefore a ſtrange Expreſſion of an ancient Writer, *That the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Faith are for that very reaſon certain credible, and meritorious to be believed; becauſe they are fooliſh, incredible and impoſſible: that in this conſiſts the merit of Chriſtian confidence; and that God therefore choſe this way, that he might, as it were, retaliate to Men the impudence of*

Idolatry

Idolatry in which they had voluntarily engaged themſelves, by the impudence of Faith, which he impoſed on them. If things were ſo; juſtly might Chriſtianity be a Scandal to the Jews, and Folly to the Greeks. But bleſſed be God, and bleſſed be that Holy Religion which we profeſs, nothing is required of us to be believed, but what is entirely Conformable to the Laws of Nature and Reaſon, and which would be our Duty to aſſent to, although no Reward attended the Aſſent. Vol. I.

In the next place, if we ought not to be ſcandalized at the Diſſent and Oppoſition of the Jews and Greeks: Much leſs ought we to ſuffer our ſelves to be led away by the ſame Prejudices with them. Men perhaps profeſſing Chriſtianity may imagine this to be impoſſible, while they continue in the open Profeſſion of it, and, ſo take no Care to prevent it. But if we examine our ſelves, I fear, we ſhall find our ſelves obnoxious to the ſame Prejudices, and to have been often ſeduced by them; if not to a Deſertion of our Religion, yet to a Violation of it.

Was the Chriſtian Faith a *Stumbling-block* to the Jews, becauſe defeating

Vol. I. their hopes of a temporal Messias, and worldly Happiness; And are not we often tempted by the Pleasures of this World, to withdraw our Obedience from the Laws of God, and thereby in effect to deny him? As often as Men prefer their worldly Interest to the least Duty of Religion; as often as by too anxious a Diligence about the Affairs of this Life, they neglect the care of another; they give just Reason to others to suspect them Guilty of the same Errour of placing all their Happiness on this side Heaven, and disbelieving the Joys of Paradise. Did the Jews often unseasonably and importunately require a Sign? And are not we often induced to distrust Providence, and murmur against the Divine Goodness; as often as God defers to rescue us from imminent Dangers and Calamities and immediately engageth not his miraculous Power in our Assistance? Do not men call in question the Justice of the Divine Dispensation; because God refuseth to violate the established Laws of his Government, and sometimes permitteth the good to pass unrewarded, and the wicked to escape unpunished in this life? Was the Christian

stian Religion *Foolishness* to the Greeks, because proposed by mean and unlearned Persons? And have not the Effects of spiritual Pride been deplored in all Ages of the Church, and continue to this day; while Men, puffed up with a vain Opinion of their own extraordinary Knowledge in Divine Matters, refuse to hear the Voice of their ordinary Pastor, Scorn to be instructed by him, and rudely turn their backs upon him? Did the Greek Philosophers despise Christianity, because plain and simple, easie to be understood, and not difficult to be performed? And are not we often betrayed by a like Prejudice to neglect our Duty, and lay aside the Study of Divine Things? How many Christians are at this day displeased with a sober and rational Form of Worship; either because it is not fraught with pompous and unuseful Ceremonies, or because it is devoid of Enthusiastick Raptures, and unintelligible Impertinences? So that we must acknowledge our selves to be no less concerned in the words and meaning of my Text, than were formerly either Jews or Greeks. Vol. I.

To conclude, if the most certain

Vol. I. Truths, and moſt Holy Religion, be notwithſtanding liable to the contradiction of fooliſh and unreaſonable Men; if the Prejudices againſt Chriſtianity be found to be unjuſt and falſe; let us neither be Offended at the Oppoſition of her Enemies, nor drawn into like Miſtakes with them either by Paſſion or Inadvertency. Let us give moſt humble and hearty Thanks to God, for ſending his Son, as at this time, into the World to redeem us, and reveal to us his Will and Pleaſure. Let us adore his Wiſdom and Goodneſs, who hath contrived ſuch excellent Methods, whereby the knowledge of this Myſtery and Revelation may, with ſufficient certainty, be tranſmitted to all Ages; improving the Happineſs of our Knowledge, by ſecuring to our ſelves the Rewards of it in a careful Practice of our Duty; that ſo we may here with Comfort hold faſt, and hereafter with Glory obtain the Promiſes of everlaſting Life: To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, for the ſake of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

The Seventh SERMON.

PREACH'D

January 20*th.* 1689.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Heb. IX. 27.

It is appointed unto Men once to die, but after this the Judgment.

I Intend not from theſe words to prove the Mortality of Mankind, or ſhew that all the Members of it are ſubject to that fatal Doom. The experience of almoſt Six Thouſand Years may abundantly convince us of this. And leaſt we ſhould imagine our ſelves to be particularly exempted from the common calamity of Mankind, that decay which we find in our Bodies, and thoſe frequent Infirmities to which we are all ſubject, permits us not to entertain any hopes of ſuch an

Vol. I. extraordinary priviledge. The neceſſity of ending this Life is ſo apparent, that it would be trifling to endeavour to demonſtrate it; however the conſideration of that neceſſity is a matter of the greateſt Moment, and which may juſtly require the moſt ſerious reflections of our Mind.

But that is not my preſent purpoſe, nor the deſign of the Apoſtle in theſe words, wherein is expreſſed the divine Determination in relation to the Mortality, and future Judgment of Men, and the Order of them; namely, that God hath decreed, that all Men ſhall once Die, and that after Death, they ſhall receive either the reward or puniſhment of their Actions. Now however the ſecret Decrees of God *be unſearchable, and his ways paſt finding out*; however a curious deſire of knowing the Nature and Reaſons of them, may be raſh and fruitleſs; yet in theſe which ſo immediately and univerſally concern Mankind, and are, in effect, the great object of our Religion, no enquiry can be unneceſſary or unuſeful; the reaſons of them are obvious and ſatisfactory, ſuch as may not only be diſcovered by us, but even ought

ought not to be unknown to us; and surely not without reason: For nothing tends more effectually to secure the Honour of God, and induce us to acquiesce in his Decrees, than an intire satisfaction of the Justice and Wisdom of them. And if this be necessary in relation to all the divine Decrees which respect us; how much more will it concern us to have a perfect knowledge of the reasons of those grand Decrees, of Death and Judgment, which the Apostle hath comprehended in the words of my Text? And from whence I shall take occasion to Discourse upon these two Heads. Vol. 4.

I. The Justice of the Divine Decree of Death to all Men. *It is appointed unto Men once to die.*

II. The Justice and Wisdom of the Divine Decree of Judgment to be executed, after Death, and not in this Life: *But after this the Judgment.*

First then, if we consider only the light of Reason, nothing can appear more just, than the Divine Decree which imposeth a necessity of Dying upon all Men. God being the Author of our existence, and the Lord of Life and Death, might justly dispose, of or

Vol. I. diſpenſe either, according to his Good Pleaſure. It was a ſufficient obligation to Man to have received the benefit of Exiſtence, without expecting a perpetual and invariable conſervation of that Exiſtence. The very Nature and Conſtitution of Man declares him to be Mortal; and then ſurely it could neither be unjuſt or unreaſonable in God to permit the natural courſe of Nature to be obſerved. Thus far the Divine Decree is unqueſtionable, and ſecure from all objections.

But then the revealed Hiſtory of the Creation of Man, and the Divine Diſpenſations in relation to him, include ſome apparent ſhew of injuſtice; which may induce inconſidering Perſons to accuſe God of overmuch Rigour, and even Tyranny, in condemning the whole Race of Mankind to the Sentence of Death, for the ſingle fault of the Firſt Man; and extending the puniſhment of that to all *his poſterity, which was yet unborn*, and therefore wholly innocent of it. A proceeding and manner of Judicature, which would appear harſh and even cruel among Men; eſpecially as it hath been erroneouſly repreſented by many Wri-

ters

ters and Divines, who endeavouring to amplifie the unlimited Power of God, and meanneſs of Man, would perſwade us, that herein God had no reſpect to the merits or demerits of Men; that he created the far greater part of Mankind for no other end, than to make them miſerable, and to ſhew forth, in their puniſhments, the effects of his Almighty Power; and that in puniſhing the fall of *Adam*, he ſubjected his whole poſterity, not only to Temporal but Eternal Death. This would indeed effectually declare the power of God, but ſuch a Power as would be Odious and Intolerable, Unjuſt and Tyrannical, far unbecoming the purity of a moſt perfect Being. It becomes us to entertain more noble conceptions of God, and not fancy him to be the Author of ſuch arbitrary Puniſhments, as are inconſiſtent with his Holineſs and Juſtice. To vindicate therefore theſe Divine attributes in taking occaſion from the fall of *Adam* to form an Univerſal Decree of Death to all his Poſterity, it will not be unſeaſonable to reflect a little upon it before I paſs any further. Vol. I.

To clear this matter therefore, we may

Vol. I. may obſerve, that the Nature of Man, as compounded of Soul and Body, is Mortal, and ſubject to Diſſolution, as all compounded Bodies are. It is our Soul alone, which being immaterial, and void of all Compoſition, can promiſe to it ſelf an immortal State, and that no longer than while it pleaſeth God that the ordinary courſe of Nature ſhall be obſerved. Death then was the natural effect and conſequence of our Conſtitution, even in the State of Innocence, from which Man could not be reſcued, but by a Miraculous, and extraordinary aſſiſtance of God, conſtantly preſerving the Union of Soul and Body, removing Diſeaſes, repairing the defects of Nature, and renewing the vigour of it. This extraordinary aſſiſtance therefore, and means of preſervation, was a ſuperadded favour of God, which he might confer upon Man, upon whatſoever condition himſelf pleaſed. Subjection, Adoration, and Gratitude was owing to God, the Author and Preſerver of our Being, even without the Obligation of this ſupernatural Benefit. The Dictates of Reaſon and Natural Religion, were wholly independent of it; and

and although performed exactly, and without any intervenient sin, could not justly claim any other reward from God, than the continuation of Existence, as long as the ordinary course of Nature should permit it. Vol. I.

The gift of Immortality was extraordinary, and as such might be annexed to whatsoever conditions or persons God should please to do it. God therefore made a Covenant with *Adam*, and promised to him, That if besides the observation of the Law of Nature, to which he was obliged from the consideration of his ordinary State and condition, he would more particularly manifest his Obedience and Subjection to him, by abstaining from the seemingly pleasant Fruit of a Tree in the Garden, called *the Tree of knowledge of good and evil*; he would in recompence entail upon himself and his posterity, performing the same condition, a perpetual fruition of the same State of Life, which he then enjoyed, and continue his Existence beyond the ordinary course of Nature, even for ever: which because it could not be effected without some extraordinary remedies and assistance, God Created for that purpose

Vol. 1. purpoſe *the Tree of Life*, by the powerful vertue of whoſe Fruit the decaying Nature of Man might from time to time be reſtored and preſerved without corruption. Whereas if he ſhould neglect to perform this ſmall condition, and be tempted to violate the Divine prohibition of Taſting the Fruit of *the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*, he ſhould forfeit this ſuperadded promiſe of Immortality, not only to himſelf, but to all his poſterity deſcending from him; not to be immediately deſtroyed or put to Death, but to be deprived of that extraordinary aſſiſtance, and ſo left to the ordinary courſe of Nature.

When *Adam* therefore really broke the condition, and violated the Command of God; God might juſtly withdraw, as he in effect did, the ſupernatural benefit of Immortality, and thenceforward deny it to Mankind.

The Myſtery of the Fall of *Adam* being thus explained; nothing can be more unexceptionable, or more agreeable to the ſtricteſt Rules of Juſtice and Reaſon. Hereby no Man is puniſhed for the fault of another: For the loſs or rather not obtaining a Favour, to which we have naturally no right or claim,

claim, can in no wiſe be called a pu- Vol. I.
niſhment. Hereby the Juſtice of God is cleared beyond all contradiction, ſeeing that no wrong or injury is done unto any. His Goodneſs is made evident in entailing ſo wonderful a Reward as Immortality, upon the obſervation of ſo eaſie a condition; and enforcing the obſervation of it, by an Argument drawn from the happineſs or unhappineſs of all Mankind enſuing to it; which in all reaſon might be ſuppoſed to make *Adam* infinitely more careful and concerned in it.

Laſtly, the Wiſdom of God is moſt manifeſt herein: whereby this Myſtery becomes not only juſt but rational. For by this fatal example, Mankind cannot but be made ſenſible, how ſubject they are to Temptations, and how prone to Sin. That therefore, if, what they naturally deſire, an extraordinary reward of their Obedience be expected, the hopes of which muſt be founded in a revealed Covenant; it can be obtained no otherwiſe than in vertue of a Covenant, wherein frequent remiſſion of Sin and Diſobedience may be beſtowed, upon Repentance and Reformation; and Mercy allowed to Sinners, until

til they ſhould appear abſolutely incorrigible. That therefore, neither plenary rewards nor puniſhments could be diſpenſed in this Life; and if either were deſired, they muſt neceſſarily be deferred till after Death. A Truth, which Mankind would very hardly have been convinced of, had not the Example and Fall of *Adam* taught it to us: So naturally are Men led to imagine their Supreme Happineſs to conſiſt in the perpetual fruition of thoſe worldly pleaſures and enjoyments, which they now ſo much value; and to ſuſpect the truth of thoſe promiſes, the performance of which they cannot receive till after Death. Whereas now, neither the Wiſdom of God, nor the Reaſon of things, can permit it to be otherwiſe, which I will endeavour to ſhew in diſcourſing upon the Second Head propoſed, namely in manifeſting

II. The Juſtice and Wiſdom of the Divine Decree, of deferring the execution of Judgment till after Death, and not diſpenſing the final rewards and puniſhments of Men in this Life. *It is appointed unto Men once to die; but after that*, and not before, *the Judgment.*

The

The continual Infirmities and Temptations incident to Mankind, the daily Sins committed by us, and the fatal Example of our first Parent *Adam*, not able to retain his Primitive Innocence under so many and so great advantages, evidently cause us to perceive that few, or rather none, would ever attain to Happiness, if that were bestowed in reward to unsinning Obedience only. That therefore, to make any considerable part of Mankind partakers of this Reward, it was necessary that God should proclaim an Universal Pardon to penitent sinners, and forego the punishment due to former sins, if an earnest abhorrence of them, and true reformation of Life did succeed. If notwithstanding all the highest demonstrations of repeated Mercy, and frequent Pardon of sins, our Saviour still assureth us, that *strait is the Gate and narrow is the Way, which leadeth unto Life, and few there be which find it*: How unaccessible would it be if every single Act of Disobedience defeated the hopes of it, and laid us open to the utmost Execution of the Divine wrath? If therefore we desire that this merciful dealing should be continued to us; if Vol. I.

if a Covenant of this nature be Eſtabliſhed; it is impoſſible that the final rewards and puniſhments of Men ſhould be diſpenſed in this Life.

For if a proportionate puniſhment ſhould immediately follow the Commiſſion of every ſin in this Life; how can God be ſaid to pardon our offences, and await our amendment? Or if it ſhould not attend it, how can exemplary Juſtice be executed here, ſince we ſuppoſe it not to be executed hereafter? Or if God ſhould preſently crown every good Action with as great a degree of Happineſs, as the preſent State of Humane Nature will receive; what ſhall be done, when ſuch a Perſon ſhall exchange his Piety for Vice, or wickedneſs? Or if the reward of Temporal Happineſs ſhould not be inſeparably annexed to a vertuous courſe of Life; how can God be ſaid to reward Vertue in this Life? Muſt God as often change the Scenes of Human Life; as Man changeth the inclinations of his Will? Aſſuredly ſuch an inconſtant proceeding would derogate as much from the Honour of God, as the Quiet of the World. Or muſt God await the laſt Scene of every Mans Life, wherein to diſplay

display either his Favour or Anger to him, when the shortness of the remaining time defeats the possession of any great reward, and rescues the Delinquent from the misery of his punishment? So that it is impossible to dispense the rewards and inflict the punishments of Men in this Life, but where Rewards and Happiness are annexed to unsinning Obedience only. Vol. I.

Again, such a manner of proceeding is not only unpracticable, but unuseful, even for those ends, for which it is commonly proposed; namely, to manifest the Justice of God, to vindicate the Innocence of Men, to deterr them from Sin and Wickedness, and to allure them to Piety and Holiness. For such is the dissimulation of Men, so secret are many of the most enormous Sins, so usual is it to palliate the most horrid Crimes, and not only to conceal them from the knowledge of the World, but to create a contrary Opinion of Holiness and Integrity; that no discrimination could be made by Rewards and Punishments in this Life, which might conduce to any of the ends before mentioned.

Hypocrites are no less odious to God

Vol. 1. than the moſt prophane and debauched Sinners, and are perhaps in no leſs number. Now, as it would be unreaſonable to beſtow any Reward upon theſe, leaſt the Juſtice of God ſhould be called in queſtion for ſuffering apparent vertue to paſs unrewarded; ſo it would be impoſſible to hinder Men from cenſuring the Divine Diſpenſations in relation to them, while they retained a falſe Opinion of their ſuppoſed merits. How many Innocent and Worthy Perſons are oppreſſed, calumniated, and generally eſteemed the worſt of Men? whom if God ſhould therefore refuſe to reward, his Juſtice would be deſtroyed; if he Rewarded them, while labouring under theſe falſe ſuſpicions, the opinion of his Juſtice would periſh. If then Piety and Wickedneſs may be hid from the eyes of Men; if contrary Judgments may be ſo eaſily and ſo often framed of their merits and demerits; the Juſtice of God can in no wiſe appear in diſpenſing Rewards or Puniſhments to them; no Argument can be thence framed in favour of Vertue or diminution of Vice, until the Secrets of all Hearts be diſcloſed and laid open, which the preſent

ſent Circumſtances of this Life will not permit. Vol. I.

Not only is the Execution of Judgment in this Life incongruous to the Mercy and Juſtice of God, but alſo the Nature of the Rewards and Puniſhments to be beſtowed or inflicted.

And firſt, it is impoſſible that Puniſhments ſhould be impoſed upon the wicked in this Life, proportionate to the Greatneſs of their Demerits. Every ſingle Sin committed againſt the infinite Majeſty of God by a Creature and Dependant of his own, is of an infinite Guilt, and therefore in Juſtice requires a not inferiour Degree of Puniſhment. Whereas an infinite Puniſhment cannot be ſuffered in this Life; and then how ſhall a Sinner anſwer for Ten thouſand Sins of equal guilt? If we place the Execution of Puniſhment in deſtroying the Exiſtence of a Sinner; this is ſo far from being terrible, that many have placed the utmoſt Degree of Happineſs, in Indolence or an inſenſible State, which is a neceſſary conſequence of ſuch a Deſtruction. And then, ſince good Men are not reprieved from an immature Death, being no leſs ſubject to Sickneſs, Dangers and Violence; what

Vol. I. an horrible Confusion of Justice would it be, that both good and bad should undergo the same Punishment, and not be distinguished in their End? Or if the Punishment of the wicked should be placed in insupportable Torments, continual Crosses, and dreadful Pains; what a slight matter would this be to an infinite Guilt, which deservedly calls for eternal Torments?

The greatest Aggravation of the Pains in Hell will be, that the wicked will be assured they shall have no end, and will be thereby cast into the most extreme Despair: whereas in this Case the Sinners would comfort themselves with the hopes of approaching Death, which may end their Torments and their Life together. Nay, they will be able to rescue themselves from Punishment, and escape the Divine Anger, by laying violent hands upon themselves; which they will not fear to do, when not awed with the terrour of any ensuing Punishment after Death. And after all, Punishments in this Life can only respect precedent Sins; how then shall a Sinner satisfie for those more dreadful Sins, which will escape him in the midst of his Pains; such as Blasphe-

Blaſphemy, Malice, and Unrepentance? Shall God ſuffer theſe to go unpuniſhed, or not rather reſerve them to Judgment in another World? Vol. I.

But if Judgment cannot worthily be executed upon Sinners in this World; much leſs can the righteous receive the recompence of their juſt Deeds therein. What Happineſs can be beſtowed upon Man in this mortal Life, worthy either the Supernatural Gift of God, or conſtant endeavours of Men? Is it Riches or Proſperity, ſenſual Delights and temporal Conveniencies? Alas! that God ſhould conferr no more noble Reward on his Servants and Followers: That for ſuch trifles only we ſhould employ all the Faculties of our Soul and Body in a careful diſcharge of our Duty, and univerſal Obedience to the Divine Laws: That after our Labour and Study to procure the perfection of our Nature by Vertue, Holineſs and Obedience, we ſhould attain no other Reward, than what even brute Beaſts are capable of, the ſatisfaction of our Senſes and eaſe of our Bodies. Or if any voluptuous Perſon ſhould be found ſo degenerous as to pleaſe his utmoſt Felicity in theſe carnal Enjoyments; he

Vol. 1. would fall infinitely short of his designed Satisfaction, although heaped with all the temporal Bleſſings of Heaven and Earth. The conſtant thoughts of his approaching End, which may be deferred, but cannot be removed, will imbiter all his Pleaſures, create a continual diſquiet, and torment him with perpetual Fears. And then what an inconſiderable Happineſs is that which an Ague or a Fever, a Miſtake or a Caſualty may deſtroy?

So fooliſh is it for a pious Man to expect or deſire the Completion of his Reward in this Life. And yet much more, if we conſider that it would be as well impoſſible, as unreaſonable to exerciſe the moſt Noble, and pleaſing Acts of Vertue and Religion in ſuch a ſtate. If Riches and Proſperity were entailed on juſt Men only; there would be no room left for the exerciſe of Patience and Conſtancy under Affliction; no occaſion for Charity and Contentment; in a word all the Beatitudes of the Goſpel would be deſtroyed. What greater Demonſtration of Religion can there be, than to conquer all the Temptations of the Fleſh, and deſpiſe the Pleaſures of the World? Yet this would

then

then become not only indifferent, but even unlawful: being in that Caſe a Renunciation of the Supream Happineſs, and relinquiſhing the *aſſigned Reward* by God. What more certain Manifeſtation of an ardent Love of God, than to lay down our Lives for his ſake, or at leaſt to forego all worldly Poſſeſſions when called to it? Yet this would be then no leſs fooliſh than impracticable; when God ſhould ſuffer no Perſecutions to ariſe, and diſpenſe no Rewards after Death. It would then in Wiſdom concern every Man to continue his Life and Poſſeſſions by all poſſible means, and over-look all Intereſts ſtanding in Competition with them. Charity to miſerable Perſons would be unlawful; for to the good, who ſhould be free from all Calamity, it would be unuſeful; and to ſhew it to the bad, in whom Miſery were a Puniſhment, would be to reverſe and overthrow the Sentence of God. Vol. I.

Nay, to proceed yet farther, no Vertue or Vice, Obedience or Diſobedience of God, would then take place. For no Vertue is acceptable, no Obedience deſerveth any Reward from God, any otherwiſe than as it is a free

Vol. 1. Act of our Soul, ſtrugling with the Temptations of the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil, or its own corrupt Inclinations; as it includes ſomewhat of difficulty in it, ſomewhat which evidenceth a mature Choice of right Reaſon prevailing over the oppoſition of Luſts and Paſſions. Whereas if Rewards and Puniſhments be executed in this Life, nothing will be left wherein free-will may interpoſe, all will indifferently ſtrive to be good; and it will be no leſs difficult then to be Wicked, than it is now to be Pious; when the Commands of God, and the Temptations of the World and the Fleſh ſhall draw the ſame way; and the means to gratify our Carnal deſires, will be to yield our ſelves up to the Obedience of God. What wonder will it be if Men then ſerve God, when it is even their Temporal Intereſt; and believe him to be a Righteous Judge, when their own Senſes permit them not to disbelieve it? So that while the Nature of things remain, while the Notions of Good and Evil continue, while a real difference between Vertue and Vice is maintained, and room left for the laudable exerciſe of free-will: We cannot judge

judge it possible or expedient, that the Final Sentence of God upon all Men should be Executed in this Life. Vol. I.

I will add but one consideration more, which is, that Punishments cannot be inflicted on Wicked Men in this Life, without making Good Men at the same time miserable. It would be highly unreasonable to expect from God the benefit of a constant Miracle in favour of Good Men, which may rescue them from the common calamities of Pestilence, Sword or Famine. Or if so great a discrimination could be allowed, Good Men would necessarily be involved in the same suffering by their compassion, by the loss and torments of their dearest Friends and nearest Relations, who being tormented for their Sins in this Life, would interrupt all the pleasures of Pious and Compassionate Men by their Shrieks and Clamours. It is impossible to conceive what a Scene of horror the Earth would then be, if God should choose to execute his Vengeance upon Sinners in this World. What a Face of Cruelty and Desolation would then appear! It would then bear so true a resemblance of Hell, that Good Men would rather choose

Vol. I. chooſe to be annihilated, than to be preſent in it. So that even for the ſake of Good Men, the Puniſhment of the bad is deferred to another Life.

And thus, I hope, I have at laſt abundantly ſatisfied you, both of the Juſtice and Wiſdom of God, in Forming both the Decrees mentioned in my Text, *of appointing all Men once to Die*, and in exerciſing a Final *Judgment* not till *after Death*. We may perhaps imagine that we are long ſince convinced of the Truth of this: But if we deſcend into our own Souls, and examine them throughly, I fear we ſhall find too much reaſon to queſtion the reality of our conviction. We are inured to ſenſual things, and ſenſual proofs, and apt to disbelieve all that we are told of another Life, becauſe the experience of ſenſe doth not confirm it. We are too prone to call in queſtion the Juſtice and Providence of God, if he interpoſeth not in our behalf in this World; we are ready to believe that the wicked eſcape his knowledge, when they Die in peace; and a ſeeming neglect of the Righteous in this Life, betrays us into a falſe opinion that they are equally forgotten in the next. Or

if

if we cannot find in our Souls any traces of such incredulity and suspicions; I am sure our Actions will discover them. We believe that *it is appointed for all Men once to die*, and yet put the thoughts of it far from us. We are assured that we cannot escape that Fatal Sentence, and yet live as if we were not concerned in it. We despair of prolonging our Life for many years, and yet are as solicitous about the affairs of this World, as if we were to continue in it many Ages. We own that the duration of this Life is even nothing if compared to the Eternity of the next, and yet every trifling pleasure can perswade us to exchange Eternity for this nothing. Vol. I.

If we review all the reasons, why God deferreth the Execution of his Judgments till another Life, we shall find abundant cause carefully to prepare our selves to undergo it. If God in mercy awaits our repentance even till the last scene of our Life, how dreadful may we imagine those punishments to be, which he would not inflict, till the Sinner had filled up the measure of his Iniquities; and by dying impenitent, declared himself to be ab-

Vol. I. absolutely Incorrigible, and worthy to undergo the utmost fury of an enraged God? If he rather suffers his Providence and Justice to be traduced in this World, than consent to dispose of his Rewards and Punishments according to the erroneous imaginations of Men; it is because he hath reserved an unerring Judgment to the last times, when he will infallibly return to every one the true Reward of their Actions, and discovering the most secret faults of every individual Criminal, make their demerits as publick as their punishment. If in this Life Punishments cannot be imposed with sufficient severity; how rigorous and terrible, how much exceeding all the Calamities of this World must be the Torments prepared hereafter? If the highest and most admired enjoyments here, are not worthy to be conferred as a reward to a Pious Christian; we may conclude the joys of Heaven to be inconceivable, and ought to be powerfully influenced by the hopes of them. If the Final Judgment of Men was not to be executed upon Earth, because inconsistent with the exercise of all more noble and Christian Vertus; we may be then convinced how

how neceſſary they are to fit us for the Judgment hereafter. Laſtly, if God would not inflict the deſerved puniſhments on Sinners here, leaſt he ſhould repreſent a Hell on Earth, and affright even good Men with ſo diſmal a ſpectacle, how dreadful muſt the Torments of Hell be, which may in ſome meaſure even make the Spectators miſerable? Vol. I.

Such powerful and forcing Arguments have we to oblige us to a careful practice of our Duty; and yet all this can ſcarce induce us even to a ſerious conſideration of it. Neither the certain aſſurance of Death can move, nor the Terrours of Hell affright us, nor the Hopes of Heaven allure us, nor the dread of future Judgment arreſt us: and then what if none of all theſe had been; if neither Heaven nor Hell, Death or Judgment had attended us? If God had not *appointed Men once to die*, and we had been permitted to live Immortal Sinners? What Sins ſhould we then have ſcrupled at, what Violence ſhould we not then have committed? So that even the Final Decree of Death upon all Men is no ſmall benefit to Mankind, and, far from being

Vol. I. ing repined at, ought to be gratefully received by us. At leaſt let us take care to improve the knowledge of this Decree to a real advantage, by continually preſerving it in our minds, oppoſing it to all Temptations, and acting under a conſtant ſenſe of it. So ſhall we not need to fear the Judgment which ſhall follow it; but ſhall patiently await it, boldly encounter it, and joyfully receive it: which God of his infinite Mercy grant, for the ſake and merits of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

The Eighth SERMON.

PREACH'D

February 10. 1689.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

1 Tim. I. 17.

Now unto the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen.

THE Consideration of the Divine Attributes is of such excellent use to all Christians, and tendeth so highly to beget and preserve true Notions of Religion in us; that the Spirit of God hath chosen frequently and upon all occasions to inculcate it in Holy Writ. St. *Paul* in this place breaks out in Admiration of the Divine Mercy to himself, which he had described in the foregoing Verses; and then returneth Praise

Vol. 1. Praiſe and Thankſgiving to him in theſe words: words ſo admirably framed, that they expreſs not only the extreme Gratitude of the Apoſtle; but powerfully intice us alſo to ioyn in the ſame Doxology to God, by repreſenting and briefly enumerating his infinite Perfections, upon account of which he deſerveth to be adored by us.

And indeed in this chiefly conſiſts the difference between true and falſe Religions; that in the one, right Notions of the Divine Attributes are entertained, and Worſhip founded upon them; in the other, erroneous and mean Conceptions of the Deity are taken up, and religious Adoration paid upon Reaſons which will not warrant it.

Religion is the perfection of Man, and therefore ought to be placed upon ſuch Foundations, as may ſecure the Honour of it, and convince the Conſciences of Men of the neceſſity and reaſonableneſs of it. God hath indeed out of his abundant Mercy and Love to Mankind, provided many other Arguments whereby we may be induced to Fear him, to love him, to obey his Commands, and yield Submiſſion to him. He hath ſent his Son into the World to ſave Sinners,

ners, as we are told in the 15*th.* verſe of this Chapter, that the ſenſe of ſo wonderful a Benefit might engage us to gratitude; he ſheweth forth his long ſuffering to them which believe; and to them which do both believe and act agreeably to their belief, he promiſeth everlaſting Life, as it follows in the next verſe. Vol. 1

The conſideration of theſe matters will indeed ſtrike us with a lively concern, we cannot but love the Author of theſe ſignal Benefits, admire his Goodneſs, and fear to diſpleaſe him, leaſt by his diſpleaſure we forfeit the Reward propoſed by him. Theſe are indeed powerful Arguments to us to be Religious; but yet we find nothing whereon to place the moſt eſſential Act of Religion, Worſhip and Adoration; we know not how to Form it, nor to whom to give it, till we proceed to conſider the Perfections and Attributes of God; till we begin to reflect with the Apoſtle, that he is *a King Eternal, Immortal, Inviſible, the only wiſe God*; and then we cannot but conclude with the Apoſtle alſo; *to him be Honour, and Glory, for ever and ever, Amen.*

The words therefore preſent us with theſe two conſiderations, of which I intend to Diſcourſe.

Vol. I. I. The Reaſons, why Religious Worſhip and Adoration ought to be referred and paid to God by us, namely, becauſe he is our *King, Eternal, Immortal, Inviſible, the only wiſe God.*

II. The Nature of this Religious Worſhip to be paid to him; *to him be Honour and Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Firſt then, the Reaſons why Worſhip and Adoration ought to be paid to God, are his Infinite Perfections or Attributes. That theſe belong to God we are taught by the light of Nature; it being the very firſt Notion which all Men conceive of a Deity, that he poſſeſſeth all imaginable Perfections. Only in this Mankind hath miſerably erred, in Forming wrong Notions of perfection, and attributing that to God, which however they admired in themſelves or others, would indeed not only debaſe but deſtroy the Nature of God. Such are believing an unlimited and Perpetual enjoyment of ſenſual pleaſures to be a real Happineſs and Perfection, and then aſcribing it to God; which was the brutiſh Error of Ancient Heathens and Idolaters: Or imagining a perfect indolence and unconcernedneſs for external matters to be none of his leaſt Per-

Perfections; the miſtake of the Ancient *Epicureans* and Modern *Deiſts*: Or the exerciſe of an Arbitrary Government, without reſpect to Juſtice, the Merits or Demerits of Men; as many wicked Hereticks of Old contended. Such falſe repreſentations of the Divine Nature, are intirely deſtructive of the perfection of it; and therefore although ſimple Reaſon might eaſily and certainly diſcover the Knowledge of the Divine Attributes; yet in compaſſion to the Ignorance and failures of Mankind, it pleaſed God to confirm, ſecure and advance this Knowledge by extraordinary Revelation. The Apoſtle enumerates the chief and moſt comprehenſive of theſe Attributes, in the words of my Text; which I will in order conſider. Vol. 1.

God therefore is our *King*. This implieth Dominion over us, and that belongs to God, either by the right of Nature, or the right of Redemption. By the right of Nature, he hath a double Title to Dominion over us, both as our Creator, and as the Supreme Governour of the World. He Created us, Formed us out of nothing; we are the Work of his Hands, and dependants of his Power. This is the

Vol. 1. moſt abſolute Degree of Vaſſalage which can be imagined. Among Men propriety is claimed and preſerved upon many Titles; and common reaſon would arraign us of Injuſtice, if we ſhould deny that ſubjection which is due to it; yet are the higheſt of theſe Titles inconſiderable in reſpect of Creation, and ſubordinate to it. Juſtly therefore may God expect, that as often as we conſider the Cauſe of our Being, we ſhould adore the Hand that gave it, and in a grateful acknowledgment of it ſay, "*Thou, O God, art* "*the Author of my being, thou formedſt* "*me out of nothing, I am thy Creature,* "*and thy Vaſſal; I acknowledge my ſelf* "*to be wholly thine, and reſign my ſelf* "*intirely to thy diſpoſal.* Such an Act of Adoration would have been due, although God had wholly left us to our own diſpoſal when once Created, and not interpoſed in the Government of the World; and we might even in that caſe be deſervedly accounted the worſt of wretches, if we either omitted or denyed to pay it. But then far from abandoning us to the inclinations of our own Will, and giving up the World to the fortuitous Motions of unruly

unruly Matter, he continueth to exercise a constant Government of the Creation. He hath fixed Laws and Bounds, and a particular Sphere of Action to every part of it. Even inanimate Beings are subject to the Rules prescribed by his Infinite Wisdom, and observe them without Variation, as is excellently and at length described in the 104*th.* Psalm. *He laid the Foundations of the Earth, that it never should move at any time. Thou coveredst it with the deep, like as with a Garment, the Waters stand in the Hills. At thy rebuke they flee, at the voice of thy Thunder they are afraid. He appointed the Moon for certain Seasons, and the Sun knoweth his going down.* Even brute Beasts attend his disposal and rely upon his Providence, as it follows in the same Psalm. *These wait all upon thee, that thou mayst give them meat in due season. When thou givest it them, they gather it, and when thou openest thy Haud, they are filled with Good, when thou hidest thy Face they are troubled*, and soon. Thus all parts of the Creation conspire in acknowledging the Supreme Dominion of God, and according to their several Natures, do Homage to him. And then Vol. I.

Vol. I. ſurely we cannot imagine the Rational and Intellectual part of the Creation to be excuſed from this Univerſal Duty. We may rather conclude, that Reaſon demands, and God expects a more particular Obedience and Adoration from them, for whoſe ſake only God framed the reſt of Created Beings, and endued them with Noble Faculties, whereby they are fitted to Adore and Praiſe him. As for the more noble part of the Intellectual Created World, I mean Angels; they immediately attend the Service and Praiſe of God, and are wholly employed in it, as we are aſſured in the 4*th.* Verſe of the ſame Pſalm. *Who maketh his Angels Spirits, and his Miniſters a Flaming Fire.* And then with what Juſtice can a Man plead an exemption from the performance of the ſame Duty? God gave us a Being, and ſent us into the World to perform certain conditions, ſuch as are Obedience to his Laws, Submiſſion to his Government, and Adoration of his Majeſty. If then we own Life, and the Conſequences of it to be a benefit; ſurely we cannot without extream Injuſtice refuſe to fulfil the conditions of it. Shall Man alone of all the Creation,

tion, become a Rebel to God his *King*, reject his Government, and violate his Laws, and defeat the very end for which he was Created, by neglecting it, or perhaps acting directly contrary to it? Surely we cannot imagine that the Supreme Governour of the World, who poſſeſſeth Juſtice as well as Mercy in the higheſt perfection, will for ever omit to vindicate his Government, by a ſevere puniſhment of ſuch unnatural Malefactors; and if the Queen of *Sheba* and the Men of *Ninive* will riſe up againſt the *Jews*, and Condemn them at the laſt Day; all parts of the Creation, Heaven and Earth, Beaſts and Birds, will unanſwerably condemn us in the Day of Judgment, who have refuſed to pay that Tribute of Obedience to our common Governour, which they did. Vol. I.

Thus God is our *King* by the Right of Nature, and as ſuch deſerveth Adoration from us, although he had entailed no Rewards upon it, nor obliged us with any particular Benefits. But then to us, who own our ſelves Chriſtians, who are Redeemed with the Blood of Chriſt, *who are bought with a price*; he is upon that account in a more

Vol. I. particular manner our *King* and Governour. We put our ſelves under his Government, and liſted our ſelves under his Banner, at our Baptiſm; and continue to profeſs our obligation to it, in every Act of our Chriſtian Worſhip. We believe that Chriſt is our *King*, as well as our High-Prieſt; that he hath a particular Right to Govern us, acquired by his own moſt precious Blood, and our voluntary ſubmiſſion to him. In vertue of this Right therefore he juſtly demands an intire renunciation of our ſelves and reſignation to his diſpoſal, to adore his Goodneſs, and celebrate his Mercy, to own him to be our God, and teſtifie the ſincerity of that acknowledgment by an exact Obedience.

God was formerly in a more eſpecial manner a *King* to the People of the Jews; and therefore required an eſpecial and particular Obedience of them; and, when neglecting their Duty, puniſhed them in an extraordinary manner; as he tells them in the Prophet *Amos*, Chap. III. Ver. 2. *You only have I known of all the Families of the Earth; therefore you* (beyond others) *will I puniſh for all your Iniquities*; And

if

if God requireth a greater return of Obedience in proportion to a clearer manifestation of himself, and more signal Obligations; we must conclude our selves far more nearly concerned, than were the Jews, as in the Divine Favours, so in the obligation of Obedience according to the Apostles Argument, *Hebr.* X. *He that despised* Moses *Law, died without mercy; Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?* Vol. I.

Such is our Relation to God, considered as a *King*. But then the Apostle implyeth yet somewhat further by calling him a *King Eternal*, τῷ βασιλεῖ τῶν αἰώνων: where I will not insist on their interpretation, who suppose by the Term αἰώνων, to be meant all other immaterial Beings, of what Dignity soever; that so the opinion of some Heathen Philosophers and many Ancient Hereticks may be excluded, who introduced many immaterial Beings coordinate to God, and not subject to him. This Interpretation even although

Vol. I. though it ſhould be true, is too nice for a Diſcourſe of this nature. The more natural and uſeful Importance of this word is, that as God hath been our *King* ever ſince the firſt Creation of the World; ſo he will continue his Government for ever, and exerciſe it not only till the diſſolution of this preſent Fabrick of the World, but as long as any immaterial Beings ſhall exiſt, that is, through all Ages.

A conſideration, which cannot but powerfully incline us to adore the Majeſty of God, and ſtrike us with a Reverent awe of him; while we remember that even Death cannot reſcue us from the influence of his Government, and execution of his Wrath, if we ſhall have deſerved it. Earthly Princes can maintain their Power no longer than their Lives, and reach not the Soul of Man; whereas God is our *King*, not only in this Life, but to all Eternity, not only while the Soul is joyned to the Body here, but after Death, whiles it continueth in a ſeparate State; and after the Reſurrection alſo, when it ſhall be again re-joyned to the Body. How then ought we to revere, how to Adore that God, to whoſe Government we ſhall be

be ſubject to all eternity, from whoſe Dominion not even Death can reſcue us, and in whoſe Hands are both Soul and Body? Vol. 1.

Further, while we reflect on the continuation of the Divine Government over us to all Ages, we cannot but remember and prepare for a Judgment to come. If he be then alſo our *King*, he will certainly exert his Power in a ſevere trial of our Lives and Actions, and in diſpenſing Rewards and Puniſhments; when the Nature of things, the Conſtitution of the World, and his own moſt wiſe Decrees, ſhall permit an impartial Judgment to be exerciſed, that is, after Death. It was the comfort antiently of brave ſpirits among the Heathens, (by whom ſelf-Murder was generally, though erroneouſly, believed in many caſes to be Lawful) that they could eaſily free themſelves from the threats and oppreſſion of a Tyrant, by a voluntary Death; and is the comfort of us Chriſtians, that we can baffle and overthrow all the deſigns of the moſt outragious Violence, at leaſt by a generous Death: but who can reſcue a Sinner from the anger of God, or how

ſhall

Vol. I. ſhall we eſcape his Judgment; if he be our Governour after *Death* alſo, to all Ages, *the King Eternal*?

The next Attribute aſcribed to God in my Text, is *Immortality*; which however it may ſeem coincident with the former Attribute, is very different from it. That denotes the Eternity of his Government; this either the Eternity or the Immutability of his Nature. For the word uſed in the Original implyeth both; and both mightily conduce to raiſe in us an extraordinary dread and veneration of God.

Eternity conſidered in the Divine Nature, is the moſt Tranſcendent and Eſſential of all the perfections belonging to it, and indeed the Fountain of them. For whatſoever is Eternal, that is, independent of any other Cauſe, includeth a neceſſity of Exiſtence in its own Nature, and therefore may, in ſome ſenſe, be ſaid to give a Being to it ſelf. But whatſoever can give a Being to it ſelf, can add all other perfections, ſo that no Being can be Eternal, which is not infinitely and ſupremely perfect. From hence all other Beings derived their perfections, which being variouſly and obſcurely divided among the ſeveral

veral parts of the Creation, are all united and concentre in the Creator. Vol. 1.

It is impoſſible for our finite Souls to comprehend the fulneſs of this infinite Perfection; we can only entertain a faint reſemblance of it, and comparing it to the ſeveral excellencies of Created Beings, imagine it yet ſomewhat greater than them all. We admire the brightneſs of the Sun, and cannot without aſtoniſhment view the Beauty of the World. We revere the Power of Princes, and have ſometimes been amazed at the Wiſdom and Knowledge of Men. The Nature of Angels is far more Glorious, and their perfections more refined. Theſe are the moſt excellent Patterns of the Divine Attributes, but alas, imperfect Patterns, which hold no correſpondence with the Original. Yet if we cannot but admire theſe; how Glorious and far exceeding all imagination muſt the Fountain of them be, of which theſe are no other than minute Streams or obſcure Rays? To ſo glorious, ſo infinitely perfect a Being, what Adoration is not due? what Sacrifice leſs than of our ſelves, and all the faculties of Soul and Body, can be proportionate?

On

On the other ſide, if we reflect, that this ſo infinite and perfect a Being hath admitted us to a near participation of himſelf in this Life, and promiſed to us a much nearer in the next; that he hath entailed unconceivable Rewards on the faithful Obſervers of his Commands, and threatned the moſt rigorous puniſhments to the Violaters of them; and then, that all this will be moſt certainly performed, that his Nature and Decrees are immutable, that in him *there is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of change*; we have all imaginable reaſon to apply our ſelves diligently to perform the conditions annexed to theſe Rewards, as being aſſured of the ſucceſs, *if we faint not*, becauſe *he who is faithful hathpromiſed.*

The next Attribute of God is, *Inviſibility*, which is a neceſſary conſequence of the precedent Perfections; it being impoſſible that any thing viſible or material ſhould be infinitely Perfect or Eternal. For *the things which are ſeen are Temporal; but the things which are not ſeen are Eternal.* 2 Cor. IV. 18. This formerly diſtinguiſhed the true Worſhippers of God from Heathens and Idolaters, who framed to themſelves

selves visible Gods; and is not without use even at this day. For this teacheth us what manner of Worship we owe to God, Rational and Spiritual, the Product of the most excellent faculties of our Soul; instructs us in the Purity and Spirituality of his Nature; That *he dwells not in Temples made with Hands*, but in the Hearts and Souls of Men; that the Worship we offer to him, ought to consist, not in External shew and observation, but in the affections and intention of the Mind. Lastly, reminds us of the affinity of our Souls to his Nature, by partaking in the spirituality of it; and thereby convinceth us, that the Soul as far exceeds the Body in its excellency and real interest, as God doth all Finite Creatures. Vol. I.

The last Attribute of God mentioned in my Text, is his *Wisdom*, *the only wise God*; which may respect either the extent or the supreme excellency of his Knowledge, either that he knoweth all things, the most secret Transactions and Thoughts of Men, or that he best of all knoweth the Causes of things, and the tendency of means to their proper ends; what is most fit in it self, what

what is most convenient for us. In either sense we must acknowledge God to be most worthy of our Adoration.

If God indeed seeth all our Actions and the most inward recesses of our Soul; if the most private motion of our Heart cannot escape his knowledge; this not only describes him to be of Infinite Capacity, and thereby worthy of the highest Veneration, but also encourageth to Adore and Worship him; Since we are sure that our Piety, altho never so secretly performed, cannot pass unregarded by him; that it will not be thrown away and become ineffectual. Whereas if we neglect to pay this Tribute of Honour and Glory, we cannot flatter our selves with the hopes of secrecy, and concealing it from the knowledge of God.

This of all other Attributes ought to create in us the most lively concern and diligence, to consider that God is always present as a Witness with us, to observe our demeanour, and note every Action of our Life. And if so, we may be assured, that no Action of Praise or Thanksgiving will miscarry, or fall short of its intended end, to procure the Favour of God.

In

In the next place, God not only view- Vol. 1.
eth all the parts of the Creation, and is
conſcious of every motion, whether of
the Soul or Body; but directeth all
things to their beſt and moſt proper ends,
fore-ſeeth all effects, knoweth the force
and efficacy of all Cauſes, and ordereth
all his deſigns in the moſt wiſe and per-
fect method. And that we may not
eſteem our ſelves unconcerned in all
this, he hath choſen to employ his Wiſ-
dom moſt Illuſtriouſly in favour of Man-
kind. Thus the whole Fabrick of the
World doth in ſome meaſure tend to
the Service and Happineſs of Man,
whom he Conſtituted Lord of all the
Viſible World; and moſt wiſely con-
trived it for his Convenience as well
as Pleaſure. This our Senſes teach us;
this we cannot doubt, if we view the
ſeveral parts of the Univerſe, and con-
ſider in what a Beautiful and Harmo-
nious Frame they are united, and con-
ſpire to the uſe of Man. The Methods
of Divine Providence in relation to the
Government of the World, are more
unſearchable; yet ſuch as manifeſt a
moſt compleat Wiſdom and tender
regard of our Happineſs.

But above all, his Wiſdom, as well

Vol. I. as Love to Mankind, appears moſt eminently in contriving the Redemption of loſt and ſinful Man, in a method wherein Pardon is offered to Sinners without doing injury to the Divine Juſtice; wherein Relief is afforded and Mercy granted to the infirmity of our Natures, yet Diligence and Vigilance required as neceſſary; wherein none are excluded, none can juſtly either preſume or deſpair. The Conſideration of theſe illuſtrious Inſtances of the Divine Wiſdom cannot but create in us a Submiſſion to his Laws, and Acquieſcence in his Decrees; convince us of the Juſtice of his Proceedings, and induce us to reſign up our Wills and Paſſions wholly to his Conduct and Direction; which is the moſt noble Teſtimony of giving Honour and Glory to God, that the Soul of Man is capable of, moſt pleaſing to God, and agreeable to his Nature.

For if we reflect upon the Quality of the Divine Attributes and Perfections, we ſhall eaſily diſcover, how juſtly the Apoſtle infers from them all, that to God the Poſſeſſor of them, ought to be aſcribed *Honour and Glory for ever and ever.*

We

We find that from all these Perfections God hath a right to our Praise and Adoration; this is the natural result of true Conceptions of them, and cannot in Justice be denied, ought not in Duty to be neglected. To return Honour and Glory to God is the highst Effort of Gratitude which we can aim at, and indeed the utmost which God requires of us. It had been but a mean and unworthy Acknowledgment of those infinite Perfections, to represent them upon Earth by costly Images and magnificent Pageants, to erect stately Temples in remembrance of them, or acknowledge the deference due to them by elaborate and pompous Ceremonies; Actions indeed, wherein the greatest part of the World have always expressed their religious Sentiments, yet Expressions far beneath the Dignity of that infinite Object to which they were directed. Vol. I.

The perfections of God are spiritual, and as such, require a spiritual Acknowledgment, an inward Worship; that we ever preserve Noble thoughts of God in our Souls; that we maintain an awful remembrance of our Obligation; that we own him to be the

Vol. 1. Lord of Life and Death, our King and Governour, from whom we receive our Being, and in whose sight we are Dust and Ashes; that we cautiously fear to offend him, studiously endeavour to satisfie those ends for which we were sent into the World; and in all our Actions manifest that we are sensible of our Subjection to him. Thus may we render *Honour and Glory to him for ever and ever*, in the words of the Apostle, that is, continually and without Intermission.

For a steady Course of Life fixed upon Principles and Resolutions of Obedience, and agreeable to them, is a continued Act of honouring God; although we cannot always employ our Thoughts in admiring his Perfections, or our Tongue in confessing them. The Angels indeed are by the Spirituality of their Nature fitted to celebrate the Praises of God without Intermission, as being not distracted with the Cares and Necessities of a Body, and having a more perfect Comprehension of the Divine Attributes: but of Man, whose Knowledge in this Life is imperfect, whose Temptations are numerous, and Distractions continual,

nual, no more is required, than a sincere Endeavour of directing his Life in general, by Principles and Rules, which arise from Obedience to the Commands and Will of God, and ultimately tend to the Honour of his Name. And surely we cannot imagine this Condition of Happiness, to be any difficult, much less any Grievous Matter, which is the constant Exercise of Angels now in the Supreme Fruition of their Happiness. This Constitutes their present Joy, and in this will consist our future reward, to be admitted to perform continual Acts of Honour and Glory to God in Heaven. To be urged to the Practice of the same Actions in this Life, ought rather to be esteemed an Anticipation of those future Joys, than an Imposition. If it be indeed a Happiness in Angels to be employed in continual Acts of this Nature; if it shall be hereafter an infinite Favour to us to be admitted to the same Office; it is now at least some Degree of Happiness to perform that imperfectly, which we shall then compleatly; and so much the greater Degree, by how much the more we are intent on it. Vol. I.

But then, That we may not deceive

Vol. 1. our ſelves with a falſe Opinion of giving Honour and Glory to God, when we fall ſhort of it; that we may not be ranked among thoſe, of whom God complains, That *they Honour him with their lips, but their heart is far from him*; we muſt take eſpecial Care that the Honour and Glory we pay to God be real and unfeigned. The Apoſtle teacheth us to be ſincere in this Duty by affixing an *Amen* to the end of theſe words; which is as much as to ſay, *indeed*, or *may it be ſo*; may Men ſincerely and in earneſt give Honour and Glory unto God; may their Hearts agree with their Mouths, and their Actions with their Declarations: Otherwiſe inſtead of honouring, we ſhall but vilifie and affront God, and deny his Attribute of Omniſcience, vainly imagining that our Hypocriſie is concealed from him, and undiſcerned by him.

And indeed no deliberate Sin can be committed without overthrowing our Belief of all the Divine Attributes, and effacing (or at leaſt, for a while clouding) all Notions of Religion ariſing from them. By the Commiſion of any ſuch Sin, we diſown him to be our King, withdraw our ſelves from his Govern-

Government, and refuſe to be directed by his Laws. We ſet up to our ſelves and purſue a different end from that appointed by the Laws of our Creation; we wreſt our ſelves out of the Poſſeſſion of Chriſt, by the price of whoſe Blood we were redeemed; and deliver our ſelves to his and our profeſſed Enemy, the Devil. We deny him thereby to be a *King eternal*, who continueth his Government even after Death, and exerciſeth ſevere Judgment upon Sinners, *for things done in the Body*. We diſ-believe the immutability of his Will, and fondly imagine that he will, in our Favour, reverſe his Sentence of Condemnation pronounced againſt obſtinate and deliberate Sinners. We perſwade our ſelves that we eſcape his Knowledge, and are hid from his All-ſeeing Eye. So fatal and erroneous is every deliberate Sin, that it either deſtroyeth, or debaſeth for a time, all Principles of true Religion and Notions of a Deity; and thereby becomes a temporary Apoſtacy. Vol. 1.

That we therefore may eſcape the Danger of that unhappineſs, let us conſtantly keep in Mind the infinite Perfections of God, and our Obligations

Vol. 1. arising from them; let us always remember that he is our Creator, our King and our Redeemer; that he will after Death take an exact and impartial account of our Actions; that he hath decreed Damnation to all obstinate and impenitent Sinners, and will not recall his Sentence; that he knoweth all our Thoughts, and seeth our most private Motions. Let us frequently call these things to Mind, and Act as if we had them continually before our Eyes; so shall we give Honour and Glory to God in our Lives; so may we without the Check of our own Consciences confess his Glorious Attributes with our Mouths; and so shall we be admitted to sing Glory and Honour to him eternally in Heaven: Which God grant for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Ninth SERMON.

PREACH'D

March 17*th.* 168$\frac{8}{9}$.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Pſal. XCV. 7, 8.

To day if you will hear his Voice, hearden not your hearts.

THERE is no greater Argument of the miſerable Condition of Mankind ſince the Fall of *Adam*, no fuller demonſtration of the Dominion of the Fleſh over the Spirit, of which the Scripture ſo often complains, than the wilful Omiſſion of thoſe means, which are at the ſame time allowed to be the only way to Happineſs. This Happineſs all Men earneſtly deſire; and none are ignorant that the Conditions of it are Repentance and Obedience; all acknowledge this to be highly reaſonable and

and absolutely necessary; yet all find and deplore in themselvs a continual aversion to set immediately upon the serious Practice of these Conditions.

They flatter themselves indeed with *some* hopes at least of attaining the proposed Happiness; and by the hopes of *this* support themselves, whensoever they give their Souls leave to entertain any serious Reflections. The Scripture and their own Conscience tells them, That these hopes are vain, while they continue in unrepentance; yet they defer their Repentance from day to day, and fondly imagine that it will never be too late to set upon it; they are loth to fix the time of this necessary Duty, and say to their Souls, hitherto thou hast served the Lusts of the Flesh, and Temptations of the World; henceforward, from this very moment, abandon them, and devote thy self to God.

Wisely therefore hath the Church in all Ages, ever since the Apostles time, set apart a solemn time, in every year, which we call Lent; wherein all Christians should be taught, and obliged to attend more diligently upon the Execution of their Duty; to enter into a more serious Consideration of their

eternal

eternal intereſt, and be exhorted to be- Vol. 1.
gin a reſolute Oppoſition of their Luſts
and Paſſions, by inuring themſelves to
a ſevere Exerciſe of Holineſs and Ver-
tue; by denying to gratifie the Luſt
of the Fleſh in its ordinate Deſires,
and if it be otherwiſe untamable, to re-
duce it by Maceration, or other ſober
Auſterities.

By this means Sinners are induced to bethink themſelves in earneſt of their forlorn State and Condition; and, what they were always unwilling to fix themſelves, the time of their Repentance is appointed for them, and the performance of it is aſſiſted by this excellent Diſcipline of the Church. And then, that we may not neglect it, that we may not imagine immediate Repentance to be unneceſſary; that we may not omit either to fix a time to it our ſelves, or to embrace the time appointed by the Church, wherein all the Faithful do in a more particular manner apply themſelves to exerciſe Acts of Repentance; we are aſſured by the Holy Ghoſt, That if *we* will not, yet at leaſt God hath ſet a time, wherein he expects our Repentance, and beyond which he will not await. *To day if he will*

Vol. I. *will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.*

From which words I ſhall take occaſion to Diſcourſe upon theſe two Heads.

I. The Duty of Repentance, enjoyned in thoſe words, *Harden not your hearts.*

II. The term prefixed to it, that it be done immediately, *To day if ye will hear*, &c.

I. The Duty of Repentance enjoyned, which is fitly expreſſed by theſe words, *Harden not your hearts.* For if we ſuffer our Reaſon to take place; if we wilfully ſhut not our eyes againſt the Truth, and embolden our Minds againſt the influence of it, when diſcovered, we cannot but repent. *To harden the heart*, is to Act againſt the Conviction of a Mans own Conſcience, and againſt the Dictates of truth clearly and fully manifeſted.

Thus *Pharaoh* is often in Scripture ſaid, *To have heardned his heart, when he refuſed to let the children of Iſrael go.* He was abundantly convinced, that the Diſmiſſion of them was commanded by God; he knew very well that *Moſes* was a true Prophet; he experienced the Power

Power of God, in the dreadful Plagues inflicted upon his Kingdom, and acknowledged him to be the true God, by recurring to him, and imploring his Mercy and Pardon, as often as he deſired the Plagues to be removed. Yet for all this he perverſely refuſed to obey the Command of God; and was therefore made an Example of the terrible Juſtice of God, even in this World. Vol. 1.

We have yet a nearer inſtance of this kind in the People of the *Jews*, whom the *Pſalmiſt* in theſe words particularly reflects on, *Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation; in the day of temptation, in the wilderneſs, when your Fathers tempted me, proved me, and ſaw my works.* They were a People peculiarly choſen by God, and obliged by the moſt amazing temporal Benefits, that ever were conferred on any; fed with a conſtant Miracle, led by a Prophet, and confirmed by continual Miracles wrought in Favour of them. Here was ſufficient Conviction of the Truth and Power of that God they worſhipped, of the Greatneſs of the Obligation laid upon them, and the Reaſons they had to yield an intire Obedience

to

to his Commands: Yet we find frequent Defections in them, contempt of his Precepts, vilifying of his Benefits, and disbelief of his Promiſes; which enforced God in Indignation to ſay of them; *How long will this people provoke me; and how long will it be e're they believe on me; for all the ſigns which I have ſhewed among them? I will ſmite them with the peſtilence, and diſinherit them*, &c. *Numb.* XIV. 11, 12.

So then, *To harden the heart*, is to Act againſt the Convictions, and impulſe of our own Conſciences: a Sin of the higheſt Enormity; againſt which God expreſſeth the greateſt Indignation, and on which he inflicteth the moſt ſevere Puniſhments.

This we cannot but acknowledge; this we willingly confeſs. We wonder at the impudence and obſtinacy of *Pharaoh*, we are apt to conceive Indignation, and pronounce Sentence againſt him, when we read or hear his Hiſtory. We abhor the ingratitude and baſeneſs of the *Jews*, and are aſtoniſhed to think, that they ſhould, after ſo many ſignal Miracles wrought in Favour of them, rebel againſt God, ſlight his Favours, and endeavour to ſtone *his* Prophet,

Prophet, and their own Deliverer. We condemn the Folly and unreaſonable Conduct of both; and are prone to conclude with our ſelves, had we then been in the place of *Pharaoh*, or in the number of the *Jews*, far be it from us, that we ſhould have imitated *his* obſtinacy, or *their* Perverſeneſs. But let us not deceive our ſelves, or flatter our ſelves with a vain Opinion of behaving our ſelves better in ſuch Circumſtances. Let us reflect upon our own Behaviour, in relation to the Duty of Repentance; and we ſhall find the Omiſſion of it, to be in no leſs a Degree, *a hardening of the heart*, than was the Crime either of *Pharaoh*, or of the *Jews*.

For our Conviction is no leſs than was that of *Pharaoh*, our Obligation greater than was that of the *Jews*. We are without doubt fully ſatisfied, that our God is the true God, that he hath a juſt Right to lay his Commands upon us, and to require our Obedience. We know very well, that he hath commanded us to obſerve the Rules of Holineſs, Temperance and Juſtice, and that although he hath reſerved Mercy and Pardon for Sinners; yet that this is diſpenſed upon no other Condition than that of

Vol. I. of Repentance. Without the Practice therefore of *this*, no Obedience to God can consist or be preserved. And then may not he justly be said to have *hardned his heart*, and defied the Divine Majesty, who acknowledgeth all this; and yet cannot be prevailed on to manifest his Obedience, by forsaking, bewailing, and amending his former Disobedience? Who confesseth himself to be his Creature, and to owe to his Liberality both his Life, and all the consequences of it; and yet continueth to profess Enmity to him, by retaining his sinful Habits? Who believeth all his Attributes of Almighty Power, Wisdom and Omnipresence; and yet neither dreads his Anger, nor reveres his All-seeing eye? So that if Men considered but the natural Obligations, which they have to God, they could not disobey him, or continue in Disobedience by unrepentance, without either the constant Accusation of their Consciences, or a studious stifling of them, by a profligate hardness of heart.

But then, who can reflect upon the wonderful Benefits of God, revealed in the Redemption of Mankind, without concluding impenitent Christians to be guilty

guilty of unparallel'd Obſtinacy? When the Dictates of Reaſon and natural light of Mankind, by an univerſal decay of Piety, wanted their effect, and failed in promoting among Men obedience to their Sovereign Lord and Maker: God contrived ſuch a method to reduce them to their Duty, as, if an inexcuſable ingratitude did not oppoſe, could not miſcarry. He invited them by the Blood of his only begotten Son, proclaimed Pardon to all penitent Sinners, propoſed infinite Rewards to ſincere Repentance, and ſettled a Succeſſion of Paſtors in the Church, who might renew theſe Promiſes, and promote Repentance by conſtant Exhortations. After all this it is impoſſible to corroborate or add to the Obligation of what is required of us. And if we inquire what that is; we ſhall find it to be briefly comprehended in Repentance. Vol. I.

This was the Meſſage of *John* the Baptiſt ſent *to prepare the way* to our Saviour; this was the ſubject of the Apoſtles Sermons, *Repent and be baptized.* So neceſſary is it to the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, that it is pre-required to it. The main deſign of that moſt Holy Re-

Vol. 1. ligion is to promote the Honour of God, by procuring a juſt Eſteem and Adoration of himſelf, an univerſal Obedience to his Laws, and Devotion to his Will. None of which can take place, until the love of Sin be firſt renounced and changed into a ſteady Reſolution of Submiſſion to the Divine Precepts. If then, neither the offers of Pardon can perſwade us, nor *the love of Chriſt conſtrain us*; if the frequent Exhortations of faithful Monitors cannot move us, nor the neceſſity of the thing it ſelf engage us; if theſe Arguments contrived by the moſt Wiſe Providence of God, become fruitleſs and ineffectual; it muſt be imputed to an Obduration greater than any other, becauſe oppoſing Reaſons ſtronger than any other.

If to ſlight and over-look all theſe Obligations be ſo enormous an obduration, much more Criminal will it be to deſpiſe the glorious Promiſes of Reward annexed to Repentance: becauſe theſe ought ſo much the more to affect us, by how much the more they concern us. The Reward propoſed to the Jews was no more than the temporary Poſſeſſion of a fruitful Countrey, to which perhaps ſome Men would not value their

their Title, that they might gratifie their Luſts. Yet it is recorded as a heinous Aggravation of the impiety of the Jews, That *they thought ſcorn of that pleaſant land, and gave no credence unto his words.* In the Chriſtian Religion more noble Rewards are propoſed, Rewards with which nothing in this World can ſtand in Competition; and yet all beſtowed upon this ſingle Condition of Repentance: which if it be neglected, may we not reaſonably conclude that the Reward it ſelf is deſpiſed? How then ſhall God oblige Men to his Service, if this be ineffectual? He propoſeth eternal Felicity, they prefer temporal Satisfaction; a Satisfaction ſo far beneath true Happineſs, that it carrieth no Contentment along with it, and in a ſhort time becometh nauſeous. He grants this upon eaſie Conditions; and yet Men think it not worth the while to beſtow that eaſie Labour; he beſtows it upon ſinful Men who *are* thereby his profeſſed Enemies, and yet they think not themſelves obliged by the Gift of it. They harden their Hearts againſt theſe powerful Impreſſions, and ſuffer not themſelves to be mollified by the moſt endearing kindneſs. Vol. I.

Vol. 1. Men may perhaps imagine, that it will never be too late to undertake the Acquisition of this Reward, that it may be securely neglected till the last Scene of Life. But surely it cannot but be highly unreasonable even to endanger the hopes of so great a Purchase, for the sake of any worldly Pleasure; which so infinitely transcends all the Satisfaction which this Life can afford. Not to say that it is impossible to preserve any true Satisfaction in this Life, without a probable assurance of the Fruition of the next. Men may for a while stifle the natural Desires and Notions of their Souls, and cloud the Dictates of Conscience: Yet the Soul cannot but sometimes free it self from this affected Stupidity; and, being by the Light of Reason assured of its own immortal Nature, look forward into the Ages to come, and be solicitous of its future State.

It will then perceive that that future state is an Abyss of time in comparison to this present Life, and remember the distinction of Bliss and Misery, appointed by God to the departed Souls of good or wicked Men. What a dismal Prospect will it then be to a Soul employed in these Meditations,

ons, to conſider, that the diſtinction of theſe States is moſt certain, but the Application of either of them to themſelves moſt uncertain, unleſs the hopes of Happineſs be ſecured by a timely Repentance? Not to ſay, that that *Soul* cannot appear before God without extream Aſtoniſhment, which God by all his glorious Promiſes could not induce to Repentance and Obedience to his Laws; when the Devil could tempt it by petty Luſts and fooliſh Pleaſures to its own deſtruction. If then the Propoſitions made by God to penitent Chriſtians, be infinitely more perſwaſive than all the Temptations to Sin and Diſobedience; ſurely to ſtand out againſt them, and refuſe to embrace them, till we can *Sin* no more, is a moſt fooliſh and deplorable Obduration. Vol. 1.

Further, the impenitent *Sinner* manifeſts the hardneſs of his Heart by contemning the dreadful Puniſhments denounced by God againſt him. And in this, beyond other Arguments, conſiſts that execrable Obduration, which is charged upon Impenitence. And upon this account *Pharaoh* is chiefly ſaid to have hardned his Heart: that when he had felt the moſt terrible Puniſh-

Vol. I. ments inflicted upon himself and his Nation, and saw others yet more grievous ready to be executed upon him, after so many Plagues and Threats employed for his Correction, he continued yet obstinate, and as it were defied God.

Or, that I may come nearer to my Text: The most wicked Aggravation of the Obduration of the Jews in the wilderness, was their contempt of the Divine Punishments. To them the highest Punishment was a temporal Death. And although by natural Reason they might conclude, that a Judgment, and more impartial Execution attended Sinners in another Life; yet that *was* not revealed to *them*; to whom as no more than temporal Rewards were promised, so no other than temporal Punishments were threatned. God had given frequent and terrible Instances of his Justice in this kind, by destroying the most notorious Delinquents among them by Sword, Pestilence, Earthquake, Fire from Heaven, and many other ways; yet far from being terrified by these, and discouraged from displeasing God; when their foolish Desires were not gratified in opposition to the Divine Pleasure, they feared not openly to declare

clare their Contempt of his Puniſh- Vol. I.
ments, and themſelves rather willing
to undergo them than ſubmit to his
Commands: As when they cryed out, *Numb.* XIV. 2. *Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt, or would God we had died in this wilderneſs*; and more remarkably, *Num.* XX. 3. *Would God that we had died, when our brethren,* (That is, *Core, Dathan,* and *Abiram*) *died before the Lord.*

A ſober Man might perhaps imagine it impoſſible to parallel ſo enormous an Obſtinacy, did not the daily Experience of Chriſtians confute his Suppoſition, who dare withſtand the Threats of eternal Fire, and harden their Hearts againſt any impreſſion from them. It may perhaps not be unaccountable, that reſolute and deſperate Perſons ſhould deſpiſe a temporal Death, when not affrighted with any ſucceeding Judgment; but to ſlight a Puniſhment extream in its ſharpneſs, and perpetual in its Duration, is ſuch a hardneſs of Heart, as although accompanied with no other Crimes, might juſtly deſerve to undergo the utmoſt Extremity of the Puniſhment. For the moſt wiſe contrivance of God provided the Torments of Hell, not only for the Puniſhment of the wicked

Vol. 1. after Death; but also for the Correction of all in this Life; that by the Fears of them they might be affrighted from the Commission of Sin, and even enforced to Repentance, if a most stupid Obduration of mind did not intervene.

To all these Aggravations of impenitence I should be unwilling to add, that none of the least or less usual Causes of it, is a perfect unbelief of the Revelations, Promises or Threats of God, (all Professors of Christianity being unwilling that the sincerity of their Belief should be called in question) did not the Apostle ascribe it to this cause, who citing the words of my Text, *Hebr.* III. and exaggerating the Obstinacy of the Jews, ascribes it chiefly to their unbelief in the last Verse, having before warned all Christians, *least there be in any of them an evil Heart of unbelief.* And surely not without reason: For it cannot well be conceived, that the Belief of these things should consist with a wilful continuance in Impenitence; that any Man should really believe, that there are Rewards and Punishments prepared for Men in another Life, both infinite and inexpressible; and withal acknowledge, that there is

no

no other method, whereby to obtain the one or eſcape the other, but a hearty and ſincere Repentance, and yet with this Belief and Confeſſion ſhould continue in a ſtate of Unrepentance. Or if perhaps it may be poſſible, that two ſuch contrary things ſhould conſiſt together; yet it cannot be denied, but that by his Actions he proclaims his Unbelief to the World, who neglects this neceſſary Duty of Repentance, or, which is all one, defers to perform it. Vol. I.

This was the *Second* Head propoſed; namely, the time prefixed by God to our Repentance; *To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*: Or as the Apoſtle expreſſeth it, *Hebr.* III. 13. *While it is called to day*: Which may either import, the term of our natural Life; for that Repentance will take no place after Death, agreeably to that of our Saviour, *John* IX. 4. *The night cometh, wherein no man can work*: So that Repentance being neceſſarily to be performed in this Life, and no more of this Life being certain to us than that moment, which we now enjoy, it ought to commence from this very moment: Or elſe, which ſeems moſt natural and agreeable to the Deſign of the

the Pſalmiſt, and the Apoſtle in the III. of the *Hebrews*, *repent to day*. That is, immediately; while God continueth his offers of Mercy, before it be too late; for that he will not await our Repentance till we pleaſe, nor ſuffer his Goodneſs to be wilfully ſlighted.

This term of Repentance fixed by God to every Man may be eaſily diſcovered, as being no other, than the firſt moment of his Conviction of the neceſſity of Repentance. When that Conviction is once throughly formed; when Men are fully ſatisfied, that it is their indiſpenſible Duty to conform themſelves to the Will of God; when they know withal, that this Conformity conſiſts in practiſing all the Divine Precepts of Holineſs, Juſtice and Sobriety, and that all habitual Sins are an open Oppoſition to it; when they are aſſured that God hath proclaimed his Pardon to Penitent, and denounced his Wrath to Impenitent Sinners: *Then* is Life and Death truely ſet before them; *Then* is it committed to their Choice, which they will prefer. An eaſie Choice one would imagine, had not the deplorable Experience of ſo many obſtinate Sinners taught us the unhappineſs

happineſs of Mankind in chooſing the worſe, even under Convictions of their Intereſt and Obligation to the contrary. Vol. V.

If we enquire after the Cauſe of this miſerable Perverſeneſs; we find indeed the Temptations to which Mankind is expoſed, to be very violent; the Luſts of the World and the Fleſh to be very powerful; and the Pleaſures of ſin of a bewitching Nature: Yet all this would not be ſufficient to Maſter the Dictates of Reaſon, and natural deſire of true Happineſs, which is found in all, did not an unhappy miſtake, miſguide the practice of Men, and render all the preſent Convictions of Conſcience ineffectual.

Men are apt to raiſe falſe Notions from the Divine Attribute of infinite Mercy, and flatter themſelves with vain Hopes, that the term prefixed by God to their Repentance is not yet expired; that it will never be too late to begin their Repentance, and in Vertue of it take out their Pardon. This is that *Deceitfulneſs of ſin*, of which the Apoſtle warns us in the aforementioned place, *leaſt any of us be hardned through it*, after the Example of the Jews; of whom *ſome when they had heard, did provoke,*

Verſe

Vol. I. *Verſe* 16. That is, after a full Conviction of the Power and Veracity of God, refuſed to obey his Commands, or rely on his Promiſes; as in the Caſe of their refuſal to go up and take poſſeſſion of the Land, which God had given to them, related in the XIV. of *Numbers*; to which this *Pſalm* particularly relates. They immediately indeed repented of their Folly, and reſolved forthwith to take up Arms and enter upon the Deſign; but then it was too late, they had ſlipt their time, and God refuſed, to be among them, or to give them Succeſs.

It is frivolous therefore to plead the Hopes of continual offers of Pardon for deferring of Repentance; and to pretend, that if they exactly knew the time beyond which the Patience of God would not await, they would immediately begin to form a ſincere Repentance. Such Reſolutions may poſſibly be true; and indeed unleſs a monſtrous ſtupidity intervenes, it cannot be otherwiſe. But then the term is manifeſt, and cannot be unknown to any; being the moment from which we are convinced, that it is our Duty to obey God, and know what are the Rules and Meaſures of Obedience.

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We muſt believe that God can do nothing irrational; now the reaſonableneſs of Pardon to ſinful Man, is founded either in the *invincible ignorance* of his Duty, or in the *Infirmity* of his Nature, prone to yield to powerful Temptations. The latter ſuppoſeth an endeavour of Obedience and Piety, and cannot conſiſt with a fixed and reſolved unrepentance; for then every Sin will be the effect, *not* of humane Infirmity, but of Reſolution. The former Cauſe vaniſheth, when the Ignorance of Men is removed by a clear Revelation of the Will of God. And therefore the Apoſtle tells the *Athenians*, That *God winked indeed at the times of ignorance; but now* (after the Manifeſtation of the Goſpel) *Willeth all men every where to repent.* As for us Chriſtians, we cannot pretend an Ignorance of our Duty, much leſs thoſe who have the Happineſs to be Members of a Church ſo excellently Conſtituted. We have the *Scriptures* open to us; are admoniſhed, and incited to the Practice of our Duty by weekly Exhortations; and diſown all little Arts, ſo uſual in other Churches, of procuring Salvation without a ſtrict and real Obedience.

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There remains then to us only the Plea of *Infirmity*, whereby to excuſe our Sins, and not wholly to deſpair of the Divine Mercy. This ſuppoſeth our ſincere Endeavours of performing our Duty, and a ſettled Courſe of Vertue and Piety; in which Courſe we may be overtaken with Temptations, and being unawares inſnared by them, may be betrayed into Sin, while the Soul is clouded with a Paſſion, and by violent impreſſions from the Body, or outward Objects, hath ſcarce the Liberty of directing her thoughts aright. But if when this Tempeſt is allayed, this Cloud removed; when the Mind regains its perfect Freedom, and enters into a ſerious thought of its Condition, it entertains any Complacency with the Sin performed, or is willing to permit a continuance of it; this is no longer a Sin of *Infirmity*, but of deliberate and reſolved Choice; much more when any Man reſolves wholly to ſtand out againſt the Divine Command, and Convictions of his own Conſcience, and to proceed in his unrepentance, although but for a certain time. This is a Sin of ſo heinous a Nature, that no Pardon is promiſed

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to it under the Goſpel, nor indeed can it Vol. 1.
conſiſt with the Juſtice and Holineſs of God to give it.

And then, even for Sins of *Infirmity*, it is our conſtant Duty to watch over them to prevent them, and if poſſible at laſt wholly to remove them, Otherwiſe, if the hopes of obtaining Pardon for them, betrays us into a neglect, or perhaps a voluntary Admiſſion of them, they loſe their Plea of *Infirmity*, and become Sins of *Preſumption*; Sins of a much deeper Contagion. To cure therefore and prevent even thoſe Sins, which alone can take place in a true and real Chriſtian, we muſt endeavour by an aſſiduous diligence and circumſpect Carriage to form Habits of Vertue and Piety.

For this end the Obſervation of *Lent* was wiſely inſtituted by the Church; wherein by a more than ordinary vigilance over our Actions, by frequent Meditation, Prayer and other pious Exerciſes; and if it were neceſſary, by Bodily Auſterities and Mortifications alſo, we might ſeek Remedies to the diſeaſes of our Soul; and begin to form Habits of Holineſs and Sobriety, which ſhould not expire with the Solemnity

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of the holy Season, but be continued and improved through the whole year, and even the whole Course of our Lives.

If then we be indeed convinced that Repentance is a necessary Duty, that it ought to be undertaken upon the first Conviction, and that to defer it after *That*, is an unpardonable Obduration; let us from this moment resolve to do it: let us confirm our Resolutions by a more than ordinary vigilance and attention in this Holy Season; and so by making these pious Resolutions become Habits, continue the happy Effects of them to our Lives end. So shall we not fail of that infinite Reward, which is annexed to true Repentance, and the consequent of it, unfeigned Obedience: To which Reward God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, for the Sake and Merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Tenth SERMON.

PREACH'D

March 16*th.* 16$\frac{89}{90}$.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Luke XIII 5.

Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.

IT is an ancient and moſt prudent Conſtitution of the Church, to ſet apart ſolemn Times for the exerciſe of Repentance, and a more ſerious application to the duties of Religion; founded upon the example of our Lord himſelf, who though he committed no Sins whereof to repent; yet, before he entred upon his Office, prepared himſelf for the execution by it, by an extraordinary abſtinence for forty days together; and continued by the Church in all Ages; although the remiſneſs and

degeneracy of latter times hath almoſt defeated the uſe of it. The deſign of it was, that Men, who are always willing to put off their Repentance from day to day, and contriving reaſons of their delay, being loth to fix the time of an unwelcom Duty, might be obliged by the Conſtitution of the Church, by the example of their fellow Chriſtians, and by the admonition of their Guides to enter upon it at this time; to apply themſelves in a particular manner to ſearch their Conſciences, enquire into the condition of their Souls, diſcover their Diſeaſes, and ſeek the remedies of them; by confeſſing their ſins to God, acknowledging the guilt of them, begging pardon of God who is offended by them; removing them from the Soul, introducing contrary habits of Piety and Religion; taming the unruly paſſions of the Body, by a ſerious attention to the Commands of God, to his precepts, to his Promiſes, and his Threats, to the deformity and unhappy Conſequences of Sin; by inuring the mind to Acts of Religion and Devotion, by a conſtant Meditation, both of the Duty preſcribed and the Arguments enforcing it; and if all this be not ſufficient

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to check and over-rule the violent motions of the Body, to depreſs them by abſtinence and Faſting; in a word, to ſubdue the Body to the Government of the Soul, and the Soul to the Obedience of God. Vol. 1.

We are indeed always obliged to watch over our Actions, to repent of our Sins as ſoon as we diſcover them, and to ſtrive againſt them; yet it will be neceſſary to fix ſome certain times, wherein a more ſevere examination is to be made, the ſtate of the Soul to be exactly ſearched, the imperfections and corruptions of it to be diſcovered; a ſtricter Courſe of Piety to be undergone, whereby it may make deep impreſſions in the Mind, and as it were take Root in it. This time the Church hath moſt wiſely determined, and not left her Sons to their own Direction; who might poſſibly defer their Repentance, till either it were prevented by Death, or Sin had taken ſuch deep root, that it could not be removed.

And ſuch was the excellent diſcipline of the Church herein, in former Ages; ſo Solemn and Devout their Obſervation of Lent; I mean not in abſtaining from this or that ſort of Meat, for that,

even when rightly uſed, is but ſubſervient to the great Deſign; but in the Forming an Exerciſe of a ſtrict Repentance, of a more careful Obedience, and more conſtant Devotion; that it could not fail to have great effect upon the Minds of all ſorts of Chriſtians. They were not content to exerciſe in ſecret all theſe Acts of Mortification (for ſo I call whatſoever tends to deſtroy Sin in Man, which is the true notion of mortification) but did it in publick, in the Face of the whole Church, and in many external Acts of Life. Thoſe who had committed more hainous ſins voluntarily underwent a publick Penance; ſequeſtred themſelves from the rank of the Faithful, placed themſelves in a particular part of the Church appointed for the Penitents; there publickly confeſſed their ſins, implored the mercy of God, and deſired the Interceſſion of the whole Church for them.

Not only thoſe, but all other Chriſtians, who were not conſcious to themſelves of any flagrant Crimes, ſtill applyed themſelves, during all that holy Seaſon, to an extraordinary exerciſe of all the Acts of Religion; denied themſelves many of the ordinary and Innocent

cent pleaſures of Life; that they might without interruption attend to the forming of a true Repentance, to the mortifying of their Luſts, and to the improving of their good Reſolutions into habits of Piety. I mean not that they macerated themſelves with Hair-cloth, or Whipings, or unreaſonable Faſtings; thoſe were the Follies of latter and more Ignorant Ages: but they *afflicted their Souls* with the continual thoughts of having offended God by their Sins; they endeavoured to Form a hatred of ſin, by taking the ſhame of it upon themſelves in a publick confeſſion; they daily implored the Mercy of God, with all the ardent expreſſions and real ſigns of Repentance, which Pious Souls could invent. They fitted themſelves for the receiving of that Mercy, by raiſing and fixing ſteady Notions and Reſolutions of their Duty to God, and their obligation to all the Precepts of Religion; by generous Acts of Charity, by a vigilant ſtrugling with all ſinful Motions, and even rooting them out by maceration, if no other means could prevail; that ſo they might preſent themſelves pure and unſpotted to their Lord at the enſuing ſolemnity of Vol. I.

Vol. 1. *Easter*; when whosoever did not Communicate, and had not prepared himself for it by such a precedent exercise of Repentance, did not presume to take upon himself the Name of a Christian.

While this excellent Discipline prevailed, an Universal Piety could not but be produced among the Professors of Christianity; when all those Arguments, which now chiefly hinder the practice of Repentance, did then promote it. I mean a general example, and the fear of Shame. It was then no more than fashionable to put on at least the pretence of Repentance in this Holy Season; and then to indulge to the Body its wonted Pleasures and Gayeties was no less absurd than to rejoyce at a Funeral, when all compose themselves with a seeming Gravity. Again to confess the guilt of Sin, when all joyned in the same Confession, was no matter of shame. Whereas now the example of Impenitence prevails; and to put on a more severe Deportment, to restrain the usual method of Life, would be accounted and derided as a Singularity. Now the Order of things is inverted, and through disuse

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of Confeſſion, whether publick or private, ſhame is affixed, not to the Commiſſion, but to the Confeſſion of any Sin. So that if the former excellent Diſcipline could be retrieved, the ſame ſhame, which now diverts us from Confeſſion, would then deter us from Commiſſion. Vol. I.

It can ſcarce be hoped indeed, that a Diſcipline, ſo far ſurpaſſing the degenerate ſpirit of latter times, will ever be reſtored: yet this we think our ſelves obliged to remind you of, that ye might underſtand for what end this Holy Seaſon was at firſt Inſtituted: and might be moved by this Noble Example to make at leaſt ſome uſe of ſo excellent an Inſtitution; if not to confeſs your ſins in publick, yet at leaſt to confeſs them to God in ſecret; if not to put your ſelves to an open Shame, yet at leaſt to conceive inwardly both a ſhame and hatred of your Sin; to examine your Conſciences ſtrictly, to purge them from all corruptions, to remove all vicious habits, to reconcile your ſelves to God by an earneſt Repentance of paſt Sins, and a well grounded beginning of future Obedience. To this end the Church, ſince ſhe can do no

Vol. I. more, is wont, during this ſolemnity, to inculcate by frequent exhortations the Duty of Repentance; and to this purpoſe I have choſen this Text. *Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.*

These words of our Lord were occaſioned by a pernicious error of the Jews, that the not execution of exemplary vengeance upon them in this Life, was an Argument that they were no great ſinners; and that ſignal Calamities were an Indication of an extraordinary Impiety; whereas thoſe who eſcaped any ſuch Calamities, might preſume themſelves to be Innocent, and thereupon defer, or wholly omit repentance. Thus *Pilate* having lately ſlain ſeveral *Galileans* at *Jeruſalem* in the Act of *S*acrificing, and the Tower in *Siloam* having ſlain Eighteen Men by a ſudden Fall, as we read in the *S*econd and Fourth Verſes; the Jews preſently concluded that this Calamity, which they ſuppoſed to have been inflicted by the extraordinary direction of God, was preceded with an extraordinary guilt of the *S*ufferers; and not finding ſuch Calamities to fall upon themſelves, thence raiſed a falſe perſwaſion that they were more Righteous than

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those unhappy Men, and more beloved by God. To correct this false perswasion our Lord assureth them, that it was no other than a vain delusion to think that *those Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans:* or that *those upon whom the Tower fell, were sinners above all the Inhabitants of Jerusalem:* or that themselves were more Righteous than either, and tells them that *unless they repent, they shall all likewise perish.* Vol. I.

In which words he

I. Insinuates the error of their perswasion, that the not execution of Divine Vengeance in this Life, is an Argument of the Innocence of Men, and little necessity of Repentance. And

II. Pronounceth the certainty of their Destruction without repentance.

At this time I will confine my self to the former only; and shew the unreasonableness of deferring repentance for this cause, that God doth not revenge the Sins of Men in this Life: a reason, which hath more hindred the practice of Repentance than any other.

It was long since a complaint of the Wise Man, that the Sinner goes on securely, because he seeth not Vengeance to be *speedily executed*; and because he feels

Vol. I. feels it not in this Life, believeth there is none prepared for him in the other. He hath wholly buſied himſelf in matters of ſenſe, and takes his meaſures, formeth his Judgments from the perceptions of it; believeth not any thing which that doth not aſcertain to him; or if he doth believe the being and the Providence of God, the diſpenſation of Rewards to Good, and infliction of Puniſhment upon bad Men conſequent to it; yet through a corrupted Judgment, cannot conceive himſelf capable of any greater Happineſs than worldly Proſperity, nor of any more grievous Puniſhment than Poverty and ſecular Diſtreſs.

So that if the Rewards and Puniſhments of God, be not conſonant to theſe Conceptions, he cannot conceive wherein they ſhould conſiſt; and while he may be ſecured of the continuance of Happineſs in this Life, he hath gained his end, and reſteth ſecure as to what may befal him hereafter; he cannot believe that God can be angry with *him*, to whom he permitteth the uninterrupted enjoyment of worldly Happineſs, which while he poſſeſſeth, he ſeeth no reaſon to believe himſelf to be

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in a State of Enmity with God. If such visible Punishments did attend his sin, as in the case of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, even fear would force him to be Pious; but the want of such terrible examples continually to awaken him, betrays him to a false belief, either of the remisness and negligence of God, or of his own Innocence, not deserving any such Punishment; and in both cases draweth him into a false opinion that Repentance is not necessary. Vol. II.

But what a miserable corruption must the judgment of Man have suffered, which can be cheated into a false perswasion, that himself is capable of none but sensible Rewards or Punishments: That Man should carry about him an immaterial Soul, and yet not conceive any spiritual Benefits or Miseries? Either not know, or not value any perfections or improvements, but what the Body may receive? Yet this deluſion is too frequent in Mankind; even that part of it which believe there is within them a Spiritual and an Immortal Being which actuates their Bodies, which giveth them their thoughts, by which alone they conceive themselves Happy or Miserable. They

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acknowledge all this; and yet will not believe any Happineſs or Miſery peculiar to the Soul alone; they confeſs the Soul muſt endure for ever; and yet continue wilfully Ignorant, that it cannot continue in a Neutral State, but muſt be the Subject either of Happineſs or Miſery. So true is that obſervation of the Pſalmiſt XLIX. *ult. Man being in Honour, hath no underſtanding, but is compared to the Beaſts that periſh.* While he abounds in ſenſual pleaſures, he acts not the part of a Rational Being, conſiders not what diſtinguiſheth him from a Beaſt, the exiſtence of his Soul after death, and the capacity of receiving Rewards or Puniſhments from his Supreme Judge after the diſſolution of the Body. Beaſts are capable of a good or bad Condition, while Life is continued to them; and if a Man imagines that nothing attends him beyond this Life, he doth therein compare or level himſelf with the Beaſts that periſh.

Yet perhaps it may be imagined, that this miſtake was pardonable in the Jews, to whom our Saviour ſpoke, whoſe Religion taught them not to expect any Rewards or Puniſhments, beyond the extent of this Life; whoſe Argu-

Arguments of Obedience were an Earthly *Canaan*, a fruitful Land, a long Life, and abundance of Temporal Bleſſings; their puniſhments no other than the loſs of theſe by Captivity, Oppreſſion, Calamities, or ſudden Death. Their Fathers received no other promiſes, their Law taught no other: and therefore it was but natural for them to believe, that ſignal Calamities were the Indications of the Divine diſpleaſure ariſing from Sin; and freedom from Misfortunes, Arguments of the continuance of the Divine Favour to particular Perſons. Thus the Apoſtles ſeeing a blind Man, preſently asked their Lord, whether *for his own ſin, or for the ſin of his Parents* that Calamity was inflicted on him: And in this Chapter, the *Jews* not partaking with the *Galileans* in their miſerable end, immediately concluded, that neither had they partaken with them in the guilt, which they ſuppoſed drew that end upon them. Vol. I.

Yet notwithſtanding all this the Error of the Jews was not excuſable, Their Religion did not warrant them to make any ſuch concluſions: which propoſed indeed no other than Temporal

poral Rewards or Punishments to them; yet did not Teach that no other were to be expected by them. The cause of their mistake was, that what God had only promised to the whole Nation of the Jews together, they applyed to all the Members of it in particular. He engaged by his promise to bestow upon that Nation a Fruitful Land, to continue the possession of it to them, while his Worship and Obedience to his Laws was publickly and generally maintained; to make them fruitful, to multiply them and bless them, by giving them Fruitful Seasons, secure Peace, or at least Victory over the disturbers of their Peace. He threatned to deprive them of their Possessions, to afflict them with the Sword and Pestilence, to deliver them up to the Will of their Enemies, and deny the kind influences of Heaven to them; if they forsook his Worship, or generally violated his Laws.

In this general Prosperity and Calamity of the whole Nation, the promised Rewards or threatned Punishments of every particular Man were included; and no otherwise. God no where promiseth to them that he would by an extra-

extraordinary interpoſition preſerve the Poſſeſſions, the Peace and Plenty of a few good Men, when the prevailing and almoſt Univerſal Apoſtacy of the Nation did require a general Puniſhment. In that caſe, thoſe few good Men were to ſhare in the common Calamity, and retain no advantage beyond the others, beſides the peace of their own Conſcience, and the hopes of receiving from God hereafter a Reward of their Obedience. Neither did he threaten that he would extraordinarily puniſh the wickedneſs of a few Men, when the generality of the Nation ſhould continue in Obedience to him. They ſhared in the common Benefits of their Nation: and for the puniſhment of their particular Sins were reſerved to a future Judgment. Vol. I.

We find indeed in the Hiſtory of the Old Teſtament, that God did oft-times reſcue good Men from a general Calamity; as *Caleb* and *Joſhua* in the Wilderneſs, *Jeremy* in the Captivity of *Babylon*, and many others. On the other ſide, he ſometimes inflicted exemplary puniſhments upon private Sinners; while the whole Body of the Nation preſerved intire their Obedience, and there-

therefore still enjoyed their Peace; as in the case of *Achan* and *Uzziah*. But these are to be esteemed so many extraordinary Acts of Providence, exercised for the vindication of his Justice and Government, not in vertue of the Covenant which he made with that People; which we find chiefly in the Book of *Deuteronomy*; and therein can discover no other than general threats or promises made not to particular Persons, but to the whole Nation taken in Society.

That the Covenant of God included no more, is manifest from the practice of following Times. For far be it from us to imagine that God violated his Covenant; yet we find that in after Ages the Good were involved in the general Calamities of the Nation, and the Bad often escaped unpunished in this World. An undeniable proof, that the contrary practice was never any part of the Covenant made by God with that People. Thus *Mordecai* and *Daniel* were carried away in the Captivity; thus *Jeroboam* and *Ahab* reigned securely. The Psalmist complains that the Wicked enjoyed all the satisfactions of Life, and *came in no misfortunes*

fortunes like other Men; while the Good were Perſecuted, Afflicted and Killed all Day long. Whereas if God had promiſed external Happineſs to every good Man of that Church in particular; or denounced viſible Puniſhments upon the hainous Sins of every ſingle Sinner; it is no more poſſible any ſuch Conduct ſhould have followed, than that God ſhould lye. It was therefore no other than a falſe perſwaſion of the Jews, that ſuch ſenſible Rewards or Puniſhments were entailed upon every one of them in particular. Vol. I.

That terrible Calamities were certain Arguments of every hainous Crimes though unknown to Men, and that eminent proſperity was a certain mark of the Favour of God; was the Opinion of the Jews, whom our Saviour here oppoſeth; and before them, of the Friends of *Job*, whoſe Arguments do all proceed upon this Principle; and which occaſioned all thoſe querulous expoſtulations with God in the Book of *Pſalms*, concerning the proſperity of the Wicked and the afflictions of the Pious. Rather the Jews ought to have concluded, that, ſince God diſtinguiſhed not always the Good and Bad by viſi-

Vol. I. ble Marks of his Favour, or Disfavour; since he suffered his Prophets and Devout Worshippers *to be Stoned, to be Sawn asunder, to Wander about in misery,* and suffer all those afflictions which the Author to the *Hebrews* Elegantly describeth; since he permitted the most notorious Sinners to go on still in their wickedness, to live in Plenty and dye in Peace; themselves had grosly mistaken the Intent of his Promise, and the Nature of his Covenant; and that a visible Impunity in this Life was no more an Argument of their own Innocence, than it was of those prosperous Sinners, at whose continued Happiness they murmured, and whose impiety at the same time they could not deny.

A right Notion concerning the manner of the Divine Conduct and distribution of Justice under the Jewish dispensation, will contribute much to remove a like prejudice from our Minds, with what they entertained. For if under the Jewish Law, which confined it self wholly to the Actions and Concerns of this Life, God neither promised nor exercised any such constant visible Justice, which might distinguish

ſtinguiſh the Good from the Bad, and Vol. I.
ſenſibly teach Men the neceſſity of
Repentance; much leſs can it be expected, that in the more ſpiritual Religion of Chriſt, and more abſtracted from the Intereſts of the World, any ſuch diſcrimation of Good and Bad by External Circumſtances of proſperity ſhould take place; that God ſhould conſtantly awaken the negligence of ſlothful Chriſtians by ſevere and viſible Judgments; or, if he doth not, ſhould be thought to approve their Conduct. Yet is this Error almoſt as frequent among Chriſtians, as it was formerly among the Jews. While Men enjoy the ſatisfactions of this Life ſecurely, and find themſelves at eaſe; they fondly imagine that Heaven alſo hath declared it ſelf in Favour of them, and are not willing to entertain a thought of the diſpleaſure of God towards their vicious Courſes, leaſt the thoughts of it ſhould abridge their preſent Happineſs. They are told indeed of the pleaſures and puniſhments of another Life; but conceiving no greater pleaſure than what they now enjoy, nor fearing any greater puniſhment than the deprivation of

Vol. I. that enjoyment; becauſe they find the poſſeſſion of it continued to them, they imagine themſelves ſecure, and think that they either have eſcaped the Divine Puniſhment, or not deſerved it.

To be convinced of the unreaſonableneſs of this concluſion, we need only reflect upon the example of our Bleſſed *Saviour*; who, notwithſtanding he was moſt dear to God, publickly declared to be his *beloved Son, in whom he was well pleaſed*, and even in reſpect of his Humane Nature taken ſeparately, ſaid *to increaſe in favour with God and Man*; yet in the Opinion of the World lead a miſerable and afflicted Life; underwent all thoſe things which the ſenſual appetite of Man moſt dreadeth, as Poverty, Hunger, Pain and a Violent Death; yet all this while continued to be the moſt beloved Son of God. In conformity to his Example, his Apoſtles, to whom he ſo often profeſſed an extraordinary Love, ſuffered all the ſenſible inconveniencies of this Life; and were yet the peculiar Favourites of their Lord and Maſter now Exalted into Heaven. So that Temporal affliction is by no means any Indication of

of the diſpleaſure of God; nor the contrary of his Favour. Vol. I.

So then, in vain do Men reject or defer Repentance, becauſe they ſee not the conſtant execution of his diſpleaſure upon Notorious Sinners in this World. For how ſhould that diſpleaſure exert it ſelf? Not in Poverty, Afflictions, or in Temporal Calamities. For theſe we find in our Lord himſelf, and his deareſt Servants, and therefore can never be any Argument of the diſ-favour of God. Yet from theſe Characters alone, Man would take his meaſures, who fondly imagineth nothing to be more dreadful than ſuch Diſaſters, and knoweth no greater miſery than what ariſeth from them, while he conſulteth his Senſe alone. But *God ſeeth not as Man ſeeth*, he knoweth what will be real Happineſs and Miſery to Man, and therein placeth his Rewards and Puniſhments. As his Rewards are not adapted to the ſenſual imaginations of Men; ſo neither are his Puniſhments to their Fears and Paſſions. What they ſuppoſe to be a ſevere Puniſhment, may poſſibly be a Benefit, but certainly is ſo ſmall a Puniſhment, as does not at all compenſate the

Vol. 1. guilt of having offended an Infinite Majeſty. To revenge therefore the Wickedneſs of Men wholly in this Life, could not but come far ſhort of the demerit of their Actions; and after all, would but little contribute to manifeſt the Divine Juſtice of God, or excite the Repentance of Men; ſince what God would in that caſe inflict, would be far different from what Men eſteem the greateſt miſery: which renders the conſtant execution of Divine Juſtice in this Life unpracticable.

Other conſiderations make it unreaſonable.

And firſt, the Wiſdom of God hath appointed ſome time, wherein Man ſhould give a trial of his Obedience, and live in a *State* of Probation; during which time, neither Rewards nor Puniſhments of his Actions ſhould ordinarily be diſtributed; but both reſerved till that probation ſhould expire, and the laſt reſolutions of Man were known. This time can be no other than that of Life on Earth; in which Man at his firſt entrance hath propoſed to him the Arguments of Obedience to God, the Rewards of that Obedience, and all other Motives to his Duty.

ty. On the other ſide, the pleaſures of *Sin* allure him, the ſuggeſtions of evil Spirits tempt him, the want of conſideration fits him to follow the directions of ſenſe alone, and not to trouble himſelf with any other Intereſt than that of this Life. His Will and the freedom of choice is ſtill reſerved intire to him; *Life and Death is ſet before him*, as it was by *Moſes* before the Jews: he is at liberty to chooſe which he pleaſeth; ſtill remembring that upon his conduct in this Life depends the Happineſs or Miſery of his future State. Vol. I.

In the mean time God ordinarily affrights him not into his Duty, by a certain Execution of Puniſhment conſequent in this Life to the Commiſſion of his ſins; neither doth he draw him to Obedience by the ſenſible experience of Rewards. For that would deſtroy all the merit of Faith or Obedience; ſince the Actions of Men would then proceed from the dictates of their own ſenſe, not upon the principle of believing this, becauſe God hath ſaid it, or doing that becauſe God hath Commanded it.

I ſay, that ordinarily God doth not diſpoſe Men to Obedience by the ſenſi-

Vol. 1. ble experience of Juſtice executed in this Life, although often in mercy to Mankind, he doth extraordinarily in this Life Reward the eminent good Actions of his Obedient Servants, and Puniſh the more notorious Sins of wicked Men. This he doth for the Vindication of his Juſtice, and for the Inſtruction of other Men, to whom beſide the ordinary Light of Revelation, he doth ſometime indulge theſe extraordinary admonitions. But this is not to be drawn into any Rule by us; we may not hence conclude that Proſperity is an Argument of the Favour of God, or the not inflicting of exemplary Revenge, a ſign of Reconciliation with him. Rather we ought to judge, that the time of this Life God hath given us for a Trial of Obedience, during which he patiently awaits our Reſolution. All this our Lord manifeſts to us in the parable of the Tares, which the Houſholder would not ſuffer to be plucked up till the time of Harveſt, but till then, be mixed ſecurely among the Corn; plainly inſinuating, that the ordinary providence of God ſhould in this Life make no diſcrimination between the Good and Bad; but ſuffer both alike

to

to live ſecure without any denunciation of his Judgment till the time of Harveſt, which himſelf explains to be the time of the laſt Judgment, when the Tares and the Wheat ſhould be ſevered from each other. Vol. I.

This proceeding indeed doth ſhock the common underſtanding of Men; but that ariſeth from this prejudice, that Men forming Rules from like Caſes of this World, fondly imagine, that Men have eſcaped all poſſibility of puniſhment, when they have put off the Body; as the Tyrant ſaid of his Adverſary, who had killed himſelf, *that he had eſcaped his Hands.* In that caſe Men ſee not the puniſhment inflicted on them; and then thoſe who are wont to conſult the report of ſenſe alone, will not believe it, little conſidering that it is impoſſible the Soul of Man ſhould periſh; that after the diſſolution of the Body it is no leſs capable of Reward or Puniſhment, ſince by that alone it is that Man even in this Life, is ſenſible of either; that after Death it ceaſeth not to be the Creature of God, ſubject to his Dominion, and reſponſible for all its Actions done in this Life, which was the time

Vol. I. time of Probation allowed to it.

All this is illuſtrated by the Parable following in this Chapter, which our Lord purpoſely delivered in confirmation of what he had ſpoken in the Text. There God is repreſented in the Perſon of the Poſſeſſor of a Vineyard, wherein was an unfruitful Vine; the ordinary apprehenſions of Men are repreſented in the Dreſſer of that Vineyard, who perceiving the unfruitfulneſs of the Vine, preſently crieth out, that it ought *to be cut down*, that *it cumbreth the Ground*, that it ſhould be rooted up and caſt out of the Vineyard. The Owner of the Vineyard on the contrary commandeth it ſhould be let *alone for ſome while longer*, that it may fully appear, if perhaps it will ever bear Fruit; during which he willeth the Dreſſer of his Vineyard *to dig about it and dung it*, to promote the fertility of it by all means poſſible; and if after all it continueth unfruitful, then giveth ſentence that *it ſhall be cut down.*

During the time of this Life, God executeth not his final ſentence upon Men; he doth not immediately deliver them up to the Tormentor upon the firſt Act of diſobedience; for then alas

alas who could be ſaved? But with an admirable patience awaits their Repentance till the end of Life, when there is no more place of Repentance left; and in the mean time promotes it by the ſolicitations of his Spirit, by the admonitions of his Paſtors by all imaginable methods, which may incline the Will of Man, without putting any force upon it. If then, in this Life, we find not the juſt recompence of our evil Actions; it is not becauſe they have eſcaped the knowledge of God, or paſs unregarded by him; it is not becauſe they deſerve not the Divine Vengeance, or that we continue in his Favour; but becauſe he will not alter the method of his moſt prudent Government of the World, nor violate the ordinary Rules of it; by which he hath determined this World to be the Stage of Action for Mankind, and the next to be the Seat of Judgment. Vol. I.

Yet may not this forbearance of God encourage Men to defer their Repentance till the end of their Life. That St. *Paul* tells us, *Rom.* 2. *Is to deſpiſe the riches of the goodneſs, forbearance and long-ſuffering of God, and thereby to treaſure up wrath againſt the day of wrath.*

Vol. I.

wrath. Our Lord throughout all his Goſpel warns Men concerning the ſuddenneſs and unexpected time of his coming to Judgment, in prevention of this fatal errour. What his ſecond coming was to the Jews, and what his laſt coming in Judgment will be to all Mankind, that Death is to us, which if it finds us unprepared, all the miſeries which Chriſt denounced ſhould befal them, will fall on us. Nor if Life were aſſured to us, could we at all times form ſuch a true Repentance as would qualifie us for the Mercy of God; which conſiſts not in a tranſient ſorrow for paſt Sins, but in a total change of all the vicious habits and inclinations of the Will. Nor laſtly, is there any pardon promiſed to preſumptuous ſins, deliberately committed in proſpect of the pardon offered to all truly penitent ſinners. But of the Nature, Neceſſity and Benefits of Repentance, I ſhall ſpeak more largely in the further proſecution of theſe words in my next Diſcourſe.

The

The Eleventh SERMON.

PREACH'D

March 23*d.* 16$\frac{89}{90}$.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Luke XIII. 5.

Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.

IN my laſt Diſcourſe, I deſcribed to you the Reaſon and the Excellency of the Inſtitution of this Holy Seaſon. To improve which, I propoſed to treat of Repentance from theſe words; and therein obſerved the occaſion of them; which was a pernicious miſtake of the Jews, that the Divine Juſtice, not puniſhing the Sins of men in this Life, did thereby warrant them; and that the Defect of ſuch a viſible Execution, was an Argument of the little neceſſity of Repentance. In oppoſition to which I ſhew you, that however the Jewiſh Revelation might give

give ſome Countenance to ſuch an Opinion, yet that they had therein miſtaken their Law: That under Chriſtianity there is yet much leſs Pretence to entertain ſuch a perſwaſion, which is contrary to the Conſtitution of humane Nature, to the Wiſdom of God, and to the preſent Order of the world ſettled by him the Author of it. Laſtly, That however God doth ordinarily bear with the Sins of men in this Life, and defer the Puniſhment of them to another world; yet that this giveth no reaſonable Encouragement to men to put off their Repentance till the end of their Lives.

After having removed theſe obſtacles of Repentance, I proceed to enforce the Duty, and direct you in the uſe of it. The Motive to Repentance is taken from the plain words of the Text, being the certainty of Deſtruction without Repentance, pronounced by our Lord, *Except ye repent, ye ſhall periſh.* And the Uſefulneſs of it is inſinuated in the ſame words; that by Repentance, if true, ſincere and rightly applied, Deſtruction may be avoided. Theſe two then ſhall be the Heads of my preſent Diſcourſe.

And firſt, I will improve the Argument of Repentance, drawn from the inevitable conſequence of Deſtruction attending

tending the want of it, and endeavour to convince you of the certainty of that Conſequence. The Evidence of the Argument, when once a full Conviction is formed of the truth of it, is manifeſt, being taken from that which moſt affects Mankind, their own Intereſt. It were indeed more noble to pay our juſt Obedience to God, rather from a Senſe of Duty, than that of Intereſt, rather out of Gratitude to God for the many Benefits received from him, and a Conviction of the entire Subjection due to that Almighty Being, than from the fear of Puniſhment, or the hope of Reward. But ſuch is the weakneſs of humane Nature, ſo corrupted is his Will, and ſo much darkened his Underſtanding, that this Argument hath been ever found inſufficient. God therefore of his infinite Mercy hath been pleaſed to employ that more ſenſible Argument of Profit and Intereſt, by propoſing Rewards to his obedient Servants, and denouncing Puniſhments to obſtinate Sinners. Vol. I.

An Argument, which cannot fail, if Man by reflecting on it would perſwade himſelf, that his Intereſt is indeed engaged in it. For it affects thoſe very Paſſions, which are wont to betray the Will of man to ſin, deſire and fear; and, would men

men consider, could not but be more prevalent than all other Objects which move those Passions; since the Reward proposed is more desirable, the Punishment denounced more to be feared, than any other thing whatsoever. This was the Argument which our Lord, his forerunner *John* Baptist, and his Apostles, employed to convert the World. *Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand*; the time now cometh, when he will no longer wink at the Sins of Mankind; when he will evidently declare his Resolution to punish impenitent Sinners, and even exemplifie it in the terrible Destruction of the impenitent Nation of the *Jews*, as he did shortly after. *The axe is now laid to the root of the tree, and every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be hewen down and cast into the fire.*

These and such like Denunciations of the wrath of God to unrepenting Sinners, drew multitudes of Men to a sense of, and sorrow for their Sins; not only the more devout *Jews*, but also Soldiers & Publicans, who *confessing their Sins, were* then *Baptized*; manifesting by that anciently received Emblem of Purity and Innocence, their Resolution of sinning no more. Even after a full Conviction formed of their Duty, our Lord thought fit

fit to propoſe this very Argument to his Diſciples, who had been long trained up in Obedience to him, and were now entring upon the moſt difficult Point of Chriſtianity, the patient enduring of Perſecution, Affliction, and even Death it ſelf; all which he foretold ſhould befal them in that Miſſion, which he then enjoyn'd them. Yet to theſe Fears he oppoſeth, as the greateſt Remedy, this Conſideration only, *Fear not them which can kill the Body, and after that can do no more; but I will tell you whom you ſhall fear. Fear him, who can deſtroy both Body and Soul in Hell.* All other Motives of Intereſt, all other Objects of fear or hope, concern the Body only, and terminate there: But in the Matters of Religion, the Reward to be deſired, the Puniſhment to be feared, equally concern both Soul and Body; the common Happineſs or Miſery of both *which* depends upon it. The Reward you may ſlight perhaps, as not deſiring any greater Satisfaction than what you now enjoy; but the Fear you cannot ſurmount; that will ſtill affect you. For if you ſo much value the preſent eaſe of the Body, the one part of you; you cannot but be affrighted at the certain Expectation of the eternal Miſery of both Soul and Body. If this Conſideration hath not that effect Vol. 1.

up on us, which it had upon the Hearers of Christ, *John* Baptist and the Apostles; it is because the Expectation of this denounced Destruction, far from being certain in us, is eluded by vain Perswasions, that Destruction may be avoided without Repentance. We all believe the truth of the Divine Revelations prescribing Rules of Piety, Justice and Temperance; commanding Repentance, upon neglect or violation of these Rules; giving Sentence of dreadful Punishments, upon Impenitence. We all confess that we have violated those Rules, we apply not the Remedy of Repentance; and yet we hope to avoid the Punishment. For did not Men really flatter themselves with those hopes; it is impossible that the mind of Man, convinced of the truth of such a future Punishment, and conscious of its own Demerits, should not immediately apply it self to prevent the Execution of that dreadful Sentence by a timely Repentance. These false hopes & perswasions may be referred to a double Head; either that of Presumption, or that of Inadvertency. That men, through a fond Opinion of their own worth, fancy God will exempt them from the general Sentence, and from the necessity of Repentance, or at least allow this and another & a third Sin to

to them; or that they proceed in ſin ſecurely, and with a ſort of Stupidity, never willingly conſidering the conſequences of Puniſhment upon Sin; and when they are ſuggeſted to them, ſtill putting them off, and continuing to imagine that God will however ſave them, though they know not why. Both theſe ſort of Prejudices are too common among all Chriſtians, and to both I ſhall oppoſe ſome general Conſiderations, ſhewing it impoſſible that God ſhould not execute the Sentence of Deſtruction pronounced univerſally againſt all impenitent Sinners; or in the words of my Text, that it cannot be, that Men ſhould not *repent*, and yet ſhould not *periſh*. Vol. 1.

The neceſſity of Deſtruction conſequent upon Unrepentance is drawn chiefly from the Determination of the Divine Will, which hath ſo appointed it. And the reſolution of God herein is ſo frequently and fully expreſſed in Scripture; that no doubt can be admitted of it. Nay the holy Spirit of God ſeems to have taken particular care leaſt men ſhould be deceived herein, by affixing vehement Aſſeverations to his Threats of Puniſhments. As in *Ezech.* XVII. 19. *Thus ſaith the Lord God, as I live; ſurely my Oath that he hath deſpiſed, and my Covenant that he hath broken*

Vol. I. *ken; even it will I recompense upon his own head.* And in the XXII. Chapter, having denounced to Sinners the extremity of his anger, he subjoyns, Verse 14. *Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.* So that those, who promise Salvation to themselves without Repentance of past Sins or Reformation of Life, must either pretend to new Lights and new Revelations, new terms of Covenant; or disbelieve those contained in Scripture, which are indeed the only true ones.

Yet I will not say disbelieve them. For far be it from me to judge that of many Christians, who do firmly indeed believe all the Revelations of that Sacred Writing, and yet continue their hopes of Salvation without employing the means of it. Only, we must confess, that believing them, we do not regard them; and when we do seriously reflect upon it, must acknowledge that such vain hopes are inconsistent with those revealed Truths.

For, I hope, none of this Assembly have been deceived with the idle Pretences of inward Lights, or unaccountable Revelations; of Arbitrary Election for secret Reasons, and absolute Reprobation for unknown Causes; which Delu-

sions

sions when once entertained, would ren- Vol. I.
der all Repentance useless. We hold fast
to the old form of Tradition delivered to
the Saints; pretend to no Revelations un-
known to former Ages; to know more
of the Will of God, than what our Lord
or the Apostles have plainly delivered in
Scripture. We are content to go to Hea-
ven the same way that all Saints have
gone before us, by the Exercise of Re-
pentance and good Works.* Nor, if there
be any truth in those Sacred Writings, is
there any other way. Yet we hear those
Holy Scriptures daily read to us; where-
in we are commanded by Precepts, we
are allured by Promises, we are terrified
by Threats, we are warned by Examples
to Repentance, and still continue un-
moved. We hear the voice of our Lord
calling to Repentance, the Exhortations
of his Apostles preaching to the World,
whose Message was *Repent, and be baptized.*
We read the dreadful Examples of Pu-
nishments inflicted in this World upon
notorious Sinners: And yet reflect not
that we are the Creatures of God as well
as they, that we are subject to the Laws of
Government; that the Duty is not remit-
ted, but made more severe; and that *the*
hand of God is not shortned, that he cannot
punish us; but that his Power always con-

tinueth the same; and that the Rules of Conduct given to Men are no more changed than is the Nature of them.

It is somewhat surprizing indeed, that Men should know and confess all this, and yet not attend to it, that it should be possible to form an habit of Acting constantly in opposition to the clearest, and no less constant Conviction of mind. For can we hear with what Detestation the Scripture speaketh of the hardness of *Pharaohs* Heart, and what a sudden Destruction followed; and not reflect, that in continuing deaf to so many Admonitions of Repentance we are guilty of the same Crime, and that, in one respect, in a higher Degree; inasmuch as he knew not at first, that that God, who commanded him to let the Captive *Jews* depart, was the true God, until he was convinced by many Miracles; whereas we are convinced from the beginning, of the Divine Authority of him who imposeth this Duty on us? Or can we call to mind the severe Judgments, which God exercised upon the *Jews* for sudden and rash Resolutions taken up in heat, and as soon repented of; such as their frequent Rebellions against *Moses*, their refusing to march to the promised Land, after having received a false account from the timorous Spies;

Spies; and many ſuch other occaſions? Do we remember all this, and imagine that God will paſs by unregarded our deliberate and obſtinate Rebellions, ſuch as is the Continuation of every habit of Sin? Theſe things *were written for our Example*, that by them we might receive Inſtruction; being terrified by the knowledge of their Sufferings from following the Example of their Sins. Vol. I.

It is abſurd to think that God hath remitted his Juſtice herein, and will overſee thoſe Sins in us, which he ſo eminently revenged in elder times. His Attributes always continue the ſame, his Juſtice, his Holineſs, and his hatred of Sin. The Reaſons of his Favour are eternal and unchangeable, being Piety and Obedience. Although he hath been pleaſed in ancient times to demonſtrate his Juſtice by more viſible Examples than in after Ages; which was no more than was neceſſary at the firſt Delivery of any general Revelation; partly to atteſt the Authority of thoſe Revelations, and partly to deter Men by ſuch ſevere Examples from the Proſecution of ſin; who ought thence to conclude, That if God exerciſed not the ſame Severity toward them in this Life, he reſerved it for another; it being impoſſible, that God, who *is no reſpecter of*

Vol. I. *persons*, ſhould be ſo inexorable to ſome Sinners, and unaccountably indulgent to others involved in the ſame Guilt.

To be farther convinced of the impoſſibility of Salvation without Repentance, we may conſider the Myſtery of our Lords Incarnation, Death and Paſſion; who having taken upon himſelf the Sins of Mankind, bore our Infirmities upon the Croſs, and became anſwerable to God for them. Surely, if ever God would Pardon the ſins of Men without any Satisfaction, whether of Puniſhment or Repentance; he would have remitted his Methods of Juſtice to his only begotten Son, and not required him to take upon himſelf the Shame and Bitterneſs of the Croſs. Yet ſuch was the Divine Hatred of Sin, that although earneſtly and paſſionately intreated by Chriſt in his Prayer in the Garden to remit his Decree therein, and receive Mankind to Mercy without requiring ſo ſevere a Satisfaction, he would not condeſcend to do it; nor would give Pardon to Man upon any other terms, than that ever Bleſſed Perſon, who had taken the Sins of Mankind upon him, ſhould ſuffer all the Marks of Divine Diſpleaſure, which Man in this Life can undergo, and expiate it by the ſhedding of his own Blood. Could the Juſtice

ſtice of God permit him to Pardon the ſins of Man without any ſatisfaction, he would never have put ſuch an hard Condition upon his own Son; as that either the World, whoſe Redemption he had undertaken, muſt be for ever loſt, or himſelf muſt lay down his Life in exchange for it. When therefore a Life of ſuch ineſtimable value muſt be Sacrificed to appeaſe the Anger of God to ſinful Men, how terrible muſt that Anger have been? how vehement his Hatred of ſin, the occaſion of it? Vol. I.

Nor did his Hatred of ſin expire with the offering up of that ineſtimable Sacrifice; that continueth yet fixed and conſtant. Only now, he may remit to men the full and juſt Puniſhment of their ſins without any prejudice to his Attributes, of Holineſs and Juſtice; which without that Satisfaction of the Croſs he would not do; leaſt Man ſhould conclude that he took delight in, or winked at their ſin, which he pardoned ſo eaſily; for that Sin was not of ſo deep a Guilt, ſince Man with all his ſins was capable of the Divine Favour without any Compenſation for it; whereas now Man cannot reflect upon the means of Pardon offered by God, without conceiving at the ſame time his hatred of Sin. God indeed required not the

Vol. I. the Life of every particular Man in Punishment of his Sin, which in strict Justice would seem agreeable; but he required the Life of his own Son more valuable than the Lives of all sinful Men put together. He receiveth to Mercy the most enormous Sinners; but condemned to Punishment that Divine Person, who took the Sins of them all upon him.

And even after so much done and suffered by Christ for the Expiation of the sins of Men, God distributeth not the Benefits of that Sacrifice indifferently to all who lay any Claim to it. Hereby the sins of Men are not actually pardoned, nor Man immediately acquitted of the Guilt of them; but only made capable of Pardon; and the grant of Pardon in God made possible without any Diminution to his Justice. This Pardon he distributeth to Men upon those Conditions which himself hath pleased to appoint, & those such which farther declare his Hatred of sin, being Repentance and Reformation, a Confession of the guilt of sin, and a forsaking of it; such means as may produce in the Soul of Man a like Detestation of Sin. Upon no other account can Man claim any Benefit from the Merits of that Sacrifice; the sum of the Conditions required being included in that comprehensive form

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of *Speech* ſo often mentioned in the New Teſtament: *Repent and be baptized.* Acknowledge the Guilt of your former ſins, conceive a Sorrow for them, and form a Hatred of them. Renounce any farther Exerciſe of them; teſtifie your Reſolutions to the Church into which you are received, by taking ſuch a viſible Mark upon you, as may be both a fit Emblem of your deſigned Purity, and a Seal of the Covenant made there with God. Vol. 1.

Theſe are the Conditions upon which alone Mercy is offer'd to Mankind, even after the great Expiation of the Croſs. Nor may it be hoped that God will diſpenſe with theſe Conditions in any Man. God propoſed to his own Son undertaking the *Salvation* of the World, as the only Condition to effect it, the laying down his Life for it. He propoſeth to Man, ſeeking Delivery from the Sentence of Damnation due to his Sins, as the only Condition of Pardon, ſincere Repentance. He would not remit to his own *Son* the determined Condition of the *Salvation* of the World; much leſs therefore will he remit to ſinful Men the Condition of Pardon, which he hath once fixed. If he ſpared not his eternal *Son* herein; much leſs will he ſpare Man the work of his own

Vol. 1. own hands, especially while continuing in Rebellion against him.

It neither becomes us, nor will it be of any use to us to enquire, whether God could not have pardoned the Sins of men without exacting so great a Satisfaction; or whether he cannot yet Pardon the sins of particular Men without requiring from them the ordinary Condition of Pardon, which is Repentance. It is sufficient to us, that he hath declared that he will not do it; & that he hath also said of himself, that he *cannot lie*. He hath done all which is wont to create a Belief in Man to perswade him of the certainty of his Resolution in this Matter; he hath affirmed that he will not justifie the Sinner, *unless he turns from the evil of his way*. He hath often repeated his Asseverations; he hath *confirmed them by an Oath*; he hath given frequent Examples of it, in visible Punishments of more notorious Sinners; he hath Sacrificed his own Son, because he would not change his Resolution; and yet he cannot perswade us, that in all this he deals in earnest.

We willingly believe all other Points of Revelation, but this we will not believe, that God will judge us according to the strict Rules of his Gospel; nor grant us any more Mercy, than what he hath there promised.

promiſed. We preſently lay hold of all Vol. 1.
ſuch Paſſages, as declare the infinity of his Mercy, little conſidering that it is joyned with no leſs infinite Juſtice. We remember what paſſionate Concern he often expreſſeth for the good of Mankind, forgetting his unchangeable Hatred of ſin. Whereas if we fairly conſidered thoſe very places, where God expreſſeth the greateſt Tenderneſs, and whence Men chiefly raiſe their hopes; we ſhall find, that even in them he giveth manifeſt Indications of the impoſſibility of receiving his Mercy without their own precedent Repentance. He repreſenteth himſelf as ſtretching forth his Hands to them all day long; but adds that if they will not hear, he giveth them up to their own hearts Luſts. He deſcribeth his Concern for them by the ſimilitude of a Houſholder cultivating his Vine, Dreſſing, Digging about it and watering it; but ſubjoyns his command of cutting it down, if it ſtill remains unfruitful. He breaks out into paſſionate Exclamations in ſorrow for their obdurate Impenitence. As in *Ezek.* XXXIII. 11. *As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, Turn ye from your evil way, for why will ye die O*

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ye houſe of Iſrael? And *Pſal.* LXXXI. 14. *O that my people would have hearkned unto me, for if Iſrael had walked in my ways; I ſhould ſoon have put down their enemies*, &c. and *Matt.* XXIII. 37. *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, thou that killeſt the Prophets*, &c. *how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not?* In all the Scripture there are not more vehement Proteſtations of kindneſs to Mankind; and yet all theſe carry along with them a certain Denunciation of Deſtruction without Repentance.

In the firſt place it is plainly inſinuated, that if *Iſrael* will not turn from their evil way, there is no Remedy but they muſt die. The ſecond Paſſage carrieth this Senſe in other words. O that my People would put themſelves into a capacity of receiving my Favour, which while they continue Diſobedient to me, I cannot beſtow upon them! Which becauſe they would not do, it is adjoyned in the 13. Verſe; *But my people would not hearken unto me, and Iſrael would have none of me. Therefore I gave them up unto their own hearts luſts, and let them follow their own imaginations*, or in other words, I would have none of *them*. And in the laſt place, where to the paſſionate Commiſeration

miſeration of *Jeruſalem*, it is added that our Lord even *wept over it*; yet it immediately follows, that becauſe they would not obey his command of Repentance, and put themſelves under his Protection, *Behold your houſe is left unto you deſolate.* Vol. I.

However then we dare not affirm that God could not have pardoned Man without the Expiation of the Croſs, or that he cannot communicate the Benefits of the Croſs to an unrepenting Sinner, becauſe we preſume not to meaſure the Power of God; yet this we may affirm, and this is moſt evident, that Man continuing in a ſtate of Unrepentance cannot receive the Mercy, and the Pardon of God. For the diſtribution of Mercy or Pardon ſuppoſeth a Reconciliation between God and Man; and therefore St. *Paul* ſaith of his Exhortations to Repentance, *We pray you in Chriſts ſtead, be ye reconciled to God.* While Man continueth in Sin, he is in a ſtate of Enmity with God; in as much as every Sin is a violation of the Divine Authority, and a Rebellion againſt him in its own Nature; and every wilful Sin is an abſolute diſclaiming of his Government, and renouncing Subjection to him. Reſolvedly to defer Repentance is ſuch a wilful Sin;

and

and therefore cuts off all communication of Favour between God and Man: it being abſurd to ſay, That he is reconciled to God, who continueth in Rebellion to him, and fears not to Affront him with his ſins; who defieth his Threats of Puniſhment againſt impenitent Sinners, or at leaſt ſlights his Commands of univerſal Repentance. Theſe things are ſo inconſiſtent, that the leaſt Attention will manifeſt the impoſſibility of a Pardon without Repentance.

This alſo follows from all thoſe earneſt Exclamations of God before-recited; which are ſo many Affirmations, that while Men continue in diſobedience to him, he cannot beſtow any Act of Favour on them: cannot, I ſay; not by reaſon of any defect of his Power, but by reaſon of the incapacity of Man to receive, in that ſtate of Unrepentance, any ſuch Favour; and in complyance to his moſt juſt Determinations of the contrary. Upon which account he plainly makes it impoſſible for himſelf to Pardon unrepenting Sinners, *Jeremy* V. 9. *Their tranſgreſſions are many; and their backſlidings are increaſed: How ſhall I pardon thee for this?*

We have hitherto conſidered God only as the Author of that revealed Religion which we profeſs. It may not be amiſs

amiſs to conſider him alſo as the common Governour of the world, and the judge of all Mankind. To the Execution of theſe Offices nothing is more neceſſary than an impartial Execution of Juſtice; which cannot conſiſt, if Rewards and Puniſhments be diſtributed without any reſpect to the Merits or Demerits of Men; if the Rewards propoſed to the diligent obſervers of the Divine Commands, be given in common to the neglecters of them. In vain then would good Men employ ſo much Induſtry, Zeal and Caution; in vain ſhould they forego the Pleaſures of Life, deny the Deſires of the ſenſual Appetite, and Labour in the more arduous Duties of Chriſtianity; if by all this they gained no more, than what negligent Sinners might ſecure to themſelves, and yet retain the uſe of all thoſe Pleaſures which a depraved Will could deſire. Vol. I.

Nor could we account for the Juſtice of God, if he ſhould require ſuch difficult Duties of his moſt faithful Servants; and yet allow the ſame Rewards to his Enemies, to impenitent Sinners, which he hath propoſed to them. Our Lord told the *Phariſees* indeed, thoſe great Pretenders to Holineſs, That *the Sinners and Publicans go into heaven before them*; and in another place ſaith, That *the Kingdom*

Vol. 1. *of heaven ſuffers violence, and the violent take it by force.* But then thoſe Sinners did repent, which the *Phariſees* refuſed to do; and the violence offered to Heaven, is there no other than Prayers and Tears. Without thoſe the ſupream Judge would continue inexorable to them; who hath promiſed indeed to lay open Heaven to penitent Sinners, but upon no other Condition will admit them into it. Otherwiſe what *Abraham* ſaid to God, *Gen.* XVIII. 25. when he imagined that God would involve the juſt Inhabitants of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* in the univerſal Deſtruction, which he was about to bring upon thoſe Cities. *That be far from thee to do after this manner, to ſlay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous ſhould be as the wicked. That be far from thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* The ſame we might juſtly apply, if God communicated the Rewards of juſt Men, ſuch as Pardon of ſins, and hope of future Happineſs, to impenitent Sinners. But far be it from us to imagine any ſuch uneven Conduct in God; who from the invariable diſtribution of Pardon to Penitent, of Puniſhment to unrepenting Sinners, raiſeth the Proof of his own Juſtice, *Ezek.* XVIII. 25, 26, 27. *Hear now O houſe of Iſrael, Is not my way equal, are not your ways*

ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteouſneſs and committeth iniquity and dieth in it; for his iniquity that he hath done he ſhall die. Again when the wicked turneth away from his wickedneſs that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right; he ſhall ſave his ſoul alive. Therefore I will judge every one according to his ways, ſaith the Lord God: Repent and turn your ſelves from all your Tranſgreſſions; ſo iniquity ſhall not be your ruin.

I have been ſo long upon this Head, that I have little time left to ſpeak of the Second; which is, the Uſefulneſs of Repentance; in that, if it be perfect, ſincere and rightly applied, it averts the Puniſhment due to ſins: Not through any intrinſick Merit of its own, but through the gracious acceptance of God, who hath promiſed Pardon upon true Repentance. That we may not be deceived therefore in the Nature of Repentance; we may reflect upon the Reaſons for which Repentance is ſo acceptable to God, who, as he is a moſt perfect Being, doth nothing without moſt evident reaſon.

God therefore, whenſoever he taketh the Soul of Man to himſelf, and calleth it to Judgment, judgeth it according to the preſent Diſpoſition of it. If a Man hath formerly lived up to his Commands,

Vol. 1. but did afterwards Apoſtatize from them, and gave up himſelf to the direction of his Luſts, and died in that corrupt Habit of Mind; he ſhall be judged according to it. If he formerly neglected his Duty, but before his Death, had changed all the Habits and Diſpoſitions of his Soul into firm Reſolutions of Obedience to God, into a perfect Hatred of Sin, and a love of Piety, and dieth in them; God will reward him according to that preſent Diſpoſition.

Such a Repentance then, which God will accept, muſt be an entire change of the very frame of the Mind; not a ſlight Sorrow for paſt ſins, nor even a bitter Sorrow for them; if founded only upon the proſpect of the Puniſhment attending them, it proceeds not to change the Habits of the Soul: For with ſuch a Sorrow a love of ſin may well conſiſt. Nor even if this Sorrow ſhould proceed to a careful diſcharge of Duty for many days together, and often break out into ardent Ejaculations of Devotion; yet will not this avail; unleſs the Will be firmly ſetled in Reſolutions of continuing the work ſo well begun, and taken off from all Complacency in ſin. As the Body of Man is not to be accounted ſound or healthful, although it hath now and then

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some intervals of Health; unless the whole Crasis of it be strong and uncorrupted. Vol. I.

That every one may judge of himself herein, let him propose to himself the greatest Temptation, which he knoweth can affect him; let him imagine himself secure from being discovered in this World, and not being immediately snatch away to Judgment; then let him impartially examine himself, whether in those Circumstances he should prefer his Duty before the Pleasure of sin. If he be well assured of his Resolution therein, he may then hope well of his own Condition. But because Men in such Examinations will be partial to themselves; let him take a View of his latest Actions; in which if he can find any sin committed deliberately, after Consideration, in cool Blood, and the Suggestions of his own Conscience to the contrary; then let him assuredly conclude, that the state of his Soul is depraved; that the whole frame of it must be changed by Repentance, before God will extend any Mercy to him; and that without such Repentance he is for ever lost.

For in every such deliberate sin, Man really chooseth Damnation to himself. In the precedent Deliberation of it, his Conscience sets before him Life and Death;

Vol. 1. on the one hand the Command of God, the Authority of his Command, and the Promiſes of Obedience; on the other hand the Guilt of ſin, and the Puniſhments affixed to it: If notwithſtanding all this his Will be over-ruled by the ſeeming Pleaſures of Vice to embrace it, and violate the Laws of God; Man doth therein make an abſolute Choice of Damnation for himſelf; and doth as truly renounce Obedience to God, as if he made an open and formal Abjuration of it. A mind therefore ſo corrupted can by no means be ſaid to be well diſpoſed or fitted to receive the favour of God.

Other Sins there are, which may conſiſt with ſuch a pious Habit of Soul as is required; namely, Sins of Ignorance and Infirmity. The firſt ſort ariſe from an Errour of the underſtanding; when a Man offends againſt his Duty, becauſe he knows it not. The ſecond Spring from the diſorder of the ſenſual Appetite; as when a Man through a ſudden fear or Paſſion is hurried on raſhly to commit a *Sin*, before he well conſiders what he doth; before he hath time to reflect upon his Duty, or to conſider with himſelf what he ſhould, or ſhould not do. But a wilful Sin, or Sin of Preſumption ariſeth from a corruption of Will, and proceeds upon

upon deliberate Choice and adviſed Re- Vol. I.
ſolution. I will illuſtrate all theſe by Examples. *St. Paul* perſecuted the Church of God, not knowing it to be his Church; although he was all the while ready to receive and obey the Truth, as ſoon as it ſhould be manifeſted to him. This was a Sin of Ignorance; for which he ſaith of himſelf that *he received Mercy, becauſe he did it in unbelief.* If this Ignorance ſhould be affected, becauſe Men will not inquire after Truth, or will not attend to it; the miſ-carriages founded upon it ceaſe to be Sins of Ignorance, and become wilful Sins. Of ſins of Infirmity St. *Peter* is a great Example; who through a ſudden fear of Death or Puniſhment, was betrayed to deny his Maſter: Although he had before fully reſolved againſt it, and as ſoon as the violence of his Fear was over, and his Mind returned to the former Freedom; as ſoon as he thought of it, *He wept bitterly.* Of wilful Sins that of *David* againſt *Uriah* is an eminent Inſtance; where the Sin of Adultery and Murder was, after long Deliberation and a Contrivance of many days together, at laſt put in Execution by him. And for this it was that *Nathan* told him he had deſerved to die; this created to him that laſting and vehement Sorrow,

Vol. I. which we often find described in the Book of *Psalms*; and this stuck as an indeliable blot to his Memory, when lesser offences were passed by. And therefore it is said of them, 1 *King.* XV. 5. That *David did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing which he commanded him, all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.* We read of many Sins of Infirmity which he committed, but these were easily pardoned; *that* stuck close to him, and could not be wiped off but by a long and strict Repentance, and patient enduring of terrible Calamities inflicted on him. Other Sins alter not the Constitution of the Soul of Man; and if a good Man should suddenly die even in the Commission of one of them, we might still hope for Mercy; but for a wilful Sin no Mercy is to be expected, till the habit of the Mind be intirely changed by Repentance.

This Distinction of Sins may instruct you in the necessary manner of forming your Repentance. For Sins of Ignorance and Infirmity, a general Repentance may suffice; a hearty Sorrow for having offended God in Thought, Word or Deed; an humble Supplication of Pardon, a sincere Resolution of endeavouring to avoid any

any ſuch for the future. But for every wilful *Sin* a particular Repentance is required, a ſad reflection of the Mind upon it, an earneſt and continued Supplication for pardon of it; a diligent ſtrugling with the corrupt Inclinations of the Will; a long Preparation of it by Prayer, by Reſolution, by Meditation, by all neceſſary Acts of Mortification, which may intirely change the Bent, and remove the Corruptions of it, and ſubdue it to the Obedience of God. Then, and not till then may the wilful *Sinner* preſume of Pardon; believe himſelf reconciled to God, and to have eſcaped the *Sentence* of Deſtruction pronounced in the Text: which God of his infinite Mercy Grant, that by a true and perfect Repentance we may all avoid, for the Sake *&c.* Vol. I.

The

The Twelfth SERMON.

PREACH'D

April 21*ſt.* 1689.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Acts X. 34, 35.

Then Peter *opened his Mouth and ſaid, Of a Truth I perceive that God is no reſpecter of Perſons.*

But in every Nation, he that feareth him and worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted with him.

THE Chriſtian Religion being the ultimate, ought alſo to be the moſt perfect Revelation of the Will of God. And that it is ſo, cannot better be diſcovered, than from its moſt perfect agreement with the Divine Attributes, and ſubſervience to them.

The end of all Religion is firſt the Honour and Service of God, and then the good of Men. The firſt is promoted by noble conceptions of God and his infinite perfections, the latter is inhanced by the ex-

extent of it. The primary attribute of God in relation to us his Government of the World, and the excellency of that consists in the Justice of it. This Justice appears most conspicuously in the Universal diffusion of his Benefits, in dispensing his Rewards as well as punishments impartially to all Orders and Ranks of Men, in excluding none from his Favour, but for Reasons common to *them* with all Mankind. Vol. 1.

This all Men conceive to be a perfection in God, and as such it must be an eternal Attribute of the Divine Nature; although the influences and effects of it may be more manifest in some Ages, and under some dispensations, than in others. As his Mercy, his Goodness, and his Power, were from all Ages equal and uniform; but more openly declared to the World by external Actions relating to us. His Justice was always impartial and universal; yet clouded in a great measure under the Mosaick Law, while the Divine Mercies were in appearance appropriated to a small division of Mankind; not clouded indeed directly and by necessary consequence; but by reason of the fond Opinion of Men, who from the peculiar Favours of God, would take occasion to fancy him partial in their behalf, and exclude the rest of the World from

Vol. I. from the participation of the ſame Happineſs.

This the Jews in a moſt groſs manner did, who imagined themſelves to be the only Members of Mankind, for whom God had any care or reſpect; fancied themſelves dear to God, not upon the common account of Piety and Obedience, but for peculiar Reaſons; as their deſcent from *Abraham*, their ſeparation from the reſt of the World by Circumciſion, and other Typical Rites. Upon this account they Treated all other Perſons as Prophane and Unclean, allowed no ſhare of the Divine Favour to them; and believed them to be utterly unregarded by God in his Government of the World.

A prejudice which the *Jews* had ſo far imbibed, that the Apoſtles retained it many years, even after the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt, and would not receive the *Gentiles* to their Company or Converſation; much leſs to the hopes and fellowſhip of the ſame bleſſed Calling, until God by an extraordinary Viſion, and by the example of *Cornelius*, taught St. Peter, *not to call any Man common or unclean*; and convinced him that his Favours, were not to be reſtrained according to the mean and unworthy conceptions of the Jews; that the extent of his Mercy

cy and Goodneſs was no more capable of limitation, than the Nature of them; and that the conditions of his Favour ſhould not, as *his* Country men had hitherto vainly imagined, be deſcent from *Abraham*, and obſervation of legal Ceremonies; but the more noble and univerſal conditions of Fear and Righteouſneſs. Convinced of this Truth, *Peter opened his Mouth and ſaid: Of a Truth I perceive, that God is no reſpecter of Perſons: But in every Nation, he that feareth him and worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted by him.* In which words we may obſerve, Vol. I.

I. The Univerſality and Impartiality of the Divine Juſtice and Favour.

II. The conditions of it, which are Fear of God and working of Righteouſneſs.

The Firſt is founded in the excellency of the Divine Nature, which enjoying all perfections in the moſt Tranſcendent manner, cannot be ſuppoſed to want that, which above all is neceſſary to a Supreme Judge and Governour of the World, Impartial Juſtice in the diſpenſing of Rewards and Puniſhments. All Men were equally created by God, and if we reſpect *that* alone, all have an equal Right to his Favour. *He accepteth not the Perſons of Princes*, ſaith *Job*, XXXIV. 19.

nor

Vol. I. *nor regardeth the rich more than the poor: for they are all the work of his Hands*: or as it is in the Book of Wiſdom, VI. 7. *He made the ſmall and the great, and doth equally take care of all.* So that in the right of Creation only, antecedently to all Merits or Demerits of Men, no reſpect is had to the Perſons of Men. Otherwiſe we could not but conceive Injuſtice to be in God; nor were it poſſible to reconcile ſuch a partial Conduct with his infinite Excellency. And therefore in 2 *Chron.* XIX. 7. the reaſon why God is no reſpecter of Perſons, is ſaid to be; becauſe *there is no Iniquity with the Lord.*

All reaſonable preference of one Perſon to another muſt neceſſarily be founded upon ſome juſt cauſe; otherwiſe it would be trifling and fond, nay even injuſt and fooliſh. We find indeed in our ſelves, our affection oft-times excited without ſufficient Reaſons. We are paſſionately carried to Objects not worthy our Love or Deſire. We value the Objects of our Love, beyond their true Merits; and weigh not ſo much the Reaſon of the Thing, as the dictates of a blind deſire. Yet after all, we never fix our affections without ſome apparent ſhew of Reaſon: Reaſons indeed oft-times falſe and frivolous, yet ſpecious and pleaſing; which the

the imperfection of our Nature permits to become effectual with us, and falſly repreſenteth to us, as perſwaſive Arguments. Vol. I.

But far be it from us to imagine any ſuch imperfections to be in God. *In him is no variableneſs or ſhadow of change.* He fully knoweth the Merits of all Cauſes, and can never be deceived by falſe Lights or Prejudices; he cannot be ſwayed by Paſſions and Affections, or be betrayed into erroneous Judgments by falſe repreſentations. He ever proceedeth upon fixed and immoveable principles, drawn from the nature of things and reaſon of Cauſes, principles which equally ſerve for all Actions and Cauſes; and are never violated for the ſake of external Circumſtances. Such as are, to be Deſcended of this or that Family, to be Born in this or that part of the World; or to practice this or that Ceremony (I mean not as a Religious Action, but as a Cuſtom of the Country.) All theſe outward Circumſtances ought not to be reſpected by an Earthly Judge, and therefore cannot have any place with God, who hath fixed moſt juſt and impartial Laws of Government, which univerſally affect all the Members of Mankind. It may not be amiſs to view theſe principles; and from them to Form right Notions of the Di-

Vol. 1. Divine Juſtice. They may be briefly comprehended in theſe three.

I. God cannot create Man on purpoſe to make him miſerable; or after a promulgation of an Eternal Covenant, deny the benefits of it to any performing the conditions of it. It may perhaps ſeem offenſive to ſay, that God cannot do this: but as the Apoſtle ſaith, *He cannot lye*; ſo we may truly ſay, He cannot be unjuſt. But what greater Injuſtice than to neceſſitate a Man to be miſerable? What more notorious reſpecting of Perſons, than to confer Salvation upon one, and deny it to another, uſing equal diligence to attain it; nay not only to deny this to him, but to puniſh him everlaſtingly without reſpect to his demerits, and only in vertue of an Arbitrary Decree of Reprobation? Surely thoſe who would perſwade Men that God acteth in this manner, contribute no leſs effectually, although not intentionally, to the extirpation of Religion and diſhonour of God, than either Atheiſts, or the moſt groſs Idolaters.

For to what purpoſe was Religion Inſtituted, Rewards and Puniſhments propoſed, Laws preſcribed, and Rules fixed; if after all Judgment is given at the laſt Day, not according to the obſervation

tion of them, but the unaccountable Decrees of Election and Reprobation? It is vain to pretend that God may juſtly do all this in right of Creation: For this cannot ſtill be denied to be reſpect of Perſons; and no reſpect of Perſons can be Juſt in God. Beſides Eternal Damnation is a State, whoſe miſeries far ſurmount the neceſſary Benefits flowing from exiſtence; and as ſuch, cannot be by God neceſſarily impoſed on any; for then the exiſtence which he gave them, would not compenſate the miſery, which he caſt upon them; which would be a manifeſt defect of Juſtice. If any believe it a more preferable State to be infinitely miſerable than not to be, I would not be ſo uncharitable as to wiſh they might be convinced by their own experience; but ſurely all will conclude them groſly miſtaken, unleſs the neceſſary Benefit of exiſtence be alſo infinite; which none will ſay. Vol. I.

2. That which is the true and ultimate Happineſs of Man, I mean Eternal Salvation, God will not, and in Juſtice cannot, confer upon one merely for the ſake of another, nor deny to one only for default of another. None is capable either of Reward or Puniſhment, but for the good or bad uſe of his own free-will; and if after his utmoſt diligence uſed,

Vol. I. Man could miss his intended Happiness through default of another; or gain it without employing that careful diligence; there could be no obligation, at least no encouragement to pursue the means, Reason directeth Men to use any means, only upon assurance or belief of their subserviency to the acquisition of the end proposed; and if there be no necessary connexion between the means and the end, it would be unreasonable for Mankind to employ the one or hope the other. Not to say, that it would be an inexcusable partiality to bestow Happiness upon one Man without any concurrence of his own, and deny even the possibility of obtaining it to another, although acting in the same Circumstances.

3. Temporal Benefits and worldly Felicity God may bestow or deny to any one for the sake of another, without any diminution of his Justice and Impartiality; which requireth no more; than that if he punisheth Man for neglecting to obtain his Supream Happiness, he should put it into his power to obtain it. This may be done either with or without Temporal Benefits or Calamities: which directly contribute nothing to that supreme end, and are purely accidental to it. God may dispose them in this World,

World, either for the vindication of his Providence, the encouragement or trial of the Faithful, the punishment or correction of the Wicked. But while they impose not on any a necessity of doing Well or Ill; nor render any Man truly Happy or Miserable; they may not be always Rewards or Punishments: and so do not necessarily attend the Obedience or Disobedience of Men. Vol. I.

Upon these unalterable principles, the Divine Justice doth proceed; and although we cannot deny any of these, without denying God at the same time to be Just and Impartial; yet Men have still continued to frame different Notions to themselves, and to Act upon them. It is so pleasing a delusion to fancy themselves dear to God in an extraordinary manner, and for unaccountable Reasons; that no wonder many have been always tempted to entertain such a charming Errour, which flatters their Ambition, gratifies their Self-love, sets them above the ordinary Rank of Men, and even exempts them from the obligation of pursuing the *Ordinary* means of Salvation, Righteousness and Holiness, Purity and Obedience.

This seduced the Jews to grow secure and confident, and to found their Title to the Favour of God, not in the diligent

Vol. I. performance of his Commands, but in their Relation to their Father *Abraham*; for whose ſake they imagined themſelves ſo dear to God, that he would certainly confer Happineſs upon them, without any farther conſideration.

This prejudice hath alſo corrupted great numbers of Chriſtians, eſpecially in this laſt Age of the Church; who place their hopes of Salvation, not upon the general grounds of Piety and Obedience, but upon ſecret Decrees of Election and Predeſtination; which may ſet them above the Rank of their Fellow-Servants, and exempt them from the Obligation, which is common to all Sober Chriſtians, of a diligent purſuit of Salvation by its proper means, obſervation of the Divine Precepts, and performance of the Conditions preſcribed by God. Hence alſo the fond pretenſions of Men have proceeded ſo far, as to perſwade themſelves that all of ſuch an Order ſhall be ſaved; or that whoſoever are of this or that Confraternity or Congregation ſhall not be Damned; and then the natural Conſequence will be, to change the ordinary Methods of Salvation, and either to reject all care of it, or place that care upon trifling and fond Obſervations.

Thus

Thus *Men have forſaken the Well of Life, and hewed Ciſterns to themſelves, Ciſterns which will hold no water*; not conſidering, that if things were ſo, all Religion would be vain and fooliſh; but above all, that God would be in a moſt groſs manner unjuſt and a partial reſpecter of Perſons, againſt the expreſs Declaration of the Apoſtle in my Text. Vol. 1.

I need not now confute the Erroneous pretenſions of theſe deluded Chriſtians; but it may not be unſeaſonable to clear the Divine Impartiality in relation to the Jews. For it may be imagined, that can *not* conſiſt with his Conduct to them. Could God interpoſe by Miracles ſo often in their behalf, feed them with Bread from Heaven, and deſtroy whole Nations to make room for them; and not be partial? Could he chooſe them out of all the Families of the Earth, declare himſelf to be in a particular manner their God, and them to be his People; who far from excelling other Men in Holineſs and Obedience, continued always to be *a ſtif-necked and ſtubborn Generation, a Generation, that ſet not their hearts aright?* Could he profeſs all this Favour to be ſhewed to them, as he often doth, not for their own Righteouſneſs, but for perſonal reſpects, for the ſake of their Fa-

Vol. I. ther *Abraham*, and their Deſcent from him? Could God perform all theſe apparent ſigns of partiality; and yet *not* be partial?

Yes ſurely, Juſtice and Impartiality are eternal Attributes in God; which began not with the Revelation of the Chriſtian Religion, but are Eſſential Properties in him, and inſeparable from his Nature: which however St. *Peter* diſcovered not till now, as being blinded with preconceived Prejudices, taken up in his Education among the Jews; a little reflection will clearly ſhew it unto us.

Firſt then, This Favour of God to the Jews for the ſake of their Father *Abraham*, conſiſted not in beſtowing on them Eternal Happineſs, but only Temporal Bleſſings; which we before ſhewed to be conſiſtent with the ſtricteſt Rules of Juſtice; and even thoſe he diſpenſed to them not merely for the ſake of their Fore-father, but in conjunction with their own Obedience; whom he required to diſtinguiſh themſelves from the reſt of Mankind by a careful obſervation of their Duty, and extraordinary Precepts, not incumbent upon other Men, nor enjoyned by the Law of Nature.

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ments upon them, no less extraordinary than his Benefits; and severely revenged in them what he oversaw in others. He admitteth them indeed to the hopes of Eternal Felicity; but that was no part of their particular Covenant, nor in consequence of any private Promise. The hopes of this were common to them with all Mankind; and not to be obtained, but upon Conditions common to all. In that no respect is had to their descent from *Abraham*; they are therein Judged by such Universal Rules, as admit no exceptions. Vol. I.

And then even those Temporal Blessings were not appropriated to them; but equally laid open to all the Members of Mankind; who if they obliged themselves to the observation of the Mosaick Law, and confirmed their engagement by the Seal of Circumcision, were no less Heirs of the Promises made unto *Abraham*, than were his immediate Descendents.

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This prejudice hath also corrupted great numbers of Christians, especially in this last Age of the Church; who place their hopes of Salvation, not upon the general grounds of Piety and Obedience, but upon secret Decrees of Election and Predestination; which may set them above the Rank of their Fellow-Servants, and exempt them from the Obligation, which is common to all Sober Christians, of a diligent pursuit of Salvation by its proper means, observation of the Divine Precepts, and performance of the Conditions prescribed by God. Hence also the fond pretensions of Men have proceeded so far, as to perswade themselves that all of such an Order shall be saved; or that whosoever are of this or that Confraternity or Congregation shall not be Damned; and then the natural Consequence will be, to change the ordinary Methods of Salvation, and either to reject all care of it, or place that care upon trifling and fond Observations.

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Vol. 1. of the Happineſs of his whole Poſterity depending on it, as to excite them to the ſame practice, by the viſible example of his Reward.

Thus the Divine Juſtice in relation to the Jews alone, is unexceptionable; but then what ſhall we ſay, if we conſider both *Jews* and *Chriſtians* as partakers of the Promiſes of Eternal Salvation; and compare them with the *Gentiles*, who are Strangers to the Covenant of Grace, and never knew either the promiſes or conditions of Salvation? *Is God the God of the Jews* and the Chriſtians *only? Is he not God of the Gentiles alſo*? Are not his Attributes always unalterable; and the influences of them equally derived down to all his Creatures? We believe that the Jews under the Old Law ſhall be ſaved through Faith, and the Merits of a Crucified Saviour, even as we are; but what proviſion ſhall be made for the far greateſt part of Mankind, who never heard of this Myſtery, nor knew any revealed Religion?

For as for thoſe, who have rejected the Goſpel when preached, and ſufficiently propoſed to them; no Doubt can remain concerning them. But for the reſt, who know not the Goſpel, nor have heard of Chriſt, hath God concluded them in an Univerſal

Universal Sentence of Damnation as some Men Dogmatically pronounce. This seemed so hard and unjust to the Ancient Christians; that rather than conceive such partiality to be in God, they framed to themselves diverse Erroneous Systems, whereby Salvation might be rendred equally possible to all Men. Vol. I.

Some fancied that Christ descended into Hell on purpose to Preach the Gospel to all departed Souls Imprisoned there; that so he might carry with him into the Regions of Bliss, all those who embraced it; and leave in deserved Torments, those who rejected it.

Others Taught that the *Souls* of all Men should be so often reunited to the Body and live again, until the Gospel should be in order proposed and Preached to all the *Sons* of *Adam*; that so their Salvation or Damnation consequent to their belief or disbelief of it, might be an Act of their own deliberate choice.

Some believed a particular place should be appointed to receive them after Death; where they should enjoy a State of Indolence.

And not a few of the most Learned of them Taught, that they might be saved; for that whatsoever they did rationally, and in compliance to the Law of Nature; they

they did it by a Reaſon, Light, and Inſtinct derived from Chriſt himſelf, who is the Eternal Λόγος, the Word and Wiſdom of the Father.

It becomes not us indeed to dive too curiouſly into the ſecrets of Heaven; or to pretend to diſcover what is hidden from us; much leſs to propoſe ſuch unwarrantable Opinions, which have no certain foundation in the Word of God. However it will be neither unlawful nor unuſeful to carry our inquiries in this matter, as far as Reaſon, and Scripture, and modeſty will permit us: whereby we may ſatisfie our ſelves of the impartial conduct of God, and vindicate his Honour in the World.

Thoſe who include all the *Gentiles* without diſtinction, in an univerſal Sentence of condemnation, have certainly no warrant from the Word of God; and it is at leaſt more charitable to err on the other hand. If by *Gentiles* we underſtand all thoſe who being unacquainted with any ſupernatural Revelations, acted only by direction of the Law of Nature; almoſt all the Patriarchs before and after the Flood, till the days of *Abraham*, will come under that denomination; and ſurely none will deny the hopes of Salvation to them. But if we mean by the

Gen-

Gentiles those who lived as *without God in the World*, who obeyed not the Law of Nature, but delivered themselves up to Idolatry and Immoral Sins, (under which notion the Name of *Gentiles* is almost every where to be understood in the New Testament) we cannot doubt of the Justice of God, in giving Sentence of Condemnation on them, and the certainty of the execution of it. Vol. I.

The doubt then remaineth only concerning those *Gentiles*, who lived since the Covenant made with *Abraham*; and performed the Law of Nature, as far as Human Infirmity would permit: who studiously observed the precepts of Piety, Temperance and Justice; who cultivated all the Faculties of their Soul with all Noble Perfections, and above all made a right use of their free will; who yielded not to the common corruptions of Idolatry and Immorality; but yet never received the knowledge of any divine Revelation, nor heard of the Name of Christ; at least heard it not sufficiently proposed to them. That there have been such brave Persons in the World, it cannot be denied; and that God cannot be unjust to them, we are no less assured, although we know not certainly his Decrees in relation to them.

Only

Vol. 1. Only let us take care of affixing ſuch Decrees to him, as cannot be accuſed from partiality.

It muſt be confeſſed that all Men do in ſtrict Juſtice deſerve Damnation, *in as much as all have ſinned, and come ſhort* of their Duty. But ſince God hath pleaſed to pardon the infirmity of Men; his Holineſs requireth him to grant his pardon by ſuch general Rules, as *all* may, if they will, partake of it. It muſt alſo be acknowledged that all are ſaved by the merits of Chriſt, and that *there is no other Name under Heaven by which any one can be ſaved*; that we all obtain ſalvation and remiſſion of ſins, by the application of his merits to us.

But then, how ſhall thoſe lay hold of his Merits, and apply them to their ſelves by Faith, who knew not of them; or muſt they be condemned merely for involuntary Ignorance? Surely if we conſider the State of the *Jews* before the coming of Chriſt, we all believe and confeſs, that they ſhall be ſaved through the merits of Chriſt; and yet they had no diſtinct knowledge of him. They knew indeed and believed that a Glorious Meſſias ſhould be given to them, who ſhould redeem them and make them happy; but as for the Sacrifice of the Croſs, by

by which the eternal Redemption of Mankind was chiefly wrought, and remiſſion obtained for ſins; they knew little of it, and even the Apoſtles underſtood it not after the performance of it; until our Lord riſing from the Dead, and pouring the Holy Ghoſt upon them, inſtructed them in the myſtery of it. So that a diſtinct knowledge of the Redemption wrought by our Saviour, ſeems not in all abſolutely neceſſary to the application of his Merits. Vol. I.

Beſides ſince it is by all confeſſed, that the *Gentiles*, before the Covenant made with *Abraham*, were by the obſervation of the Law of Nature capable of Salvation; it cannot well be imagined, how a particular Covenant, and that a Covenant of Temporal Bleſſings only, made with *Abraham*, ſhould exclude them from any further hope; eſpecially ſince the obſervation of Moral vertues is even in all revealed Religions that which chiefly recommends us to the Favour of God, and is the moſt neceſſary condition of Salvation. If then as St. *Paul* ſaith *Rom.* II. 14. *The Gentiles which have not the Law* (that is not any revealed Law) *do by nature the things contained in the Law*, (exerciſe the ſame Divine Vertues, which are enjoyned and reinforced in revealed Religions)

Vol. I. ligions) *these having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves.* And then we may charitably conclude with the Apostle also, *Glory, Honour, and Peace to every Man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. For there is no respect of Persons with God.* ver. 10, 11.

After all it must be confessed, that we are wholly in the dark in this matter. And what I have said, is not so much to perswade you that the *Gentiles* may be saved, (for that we have no certain warrant to determine) as to shew you, that no objection to the Justice and Impartiality of God, can be deduced from his conduct in relation to them. Which not only tendeth to vindicate his Honour, and to create in us a just esteem of his infinite Perfections; not only restrains us from passing uncharitable censures upon our fellow Servants, or conceiving amiss of those immutable Rules, which God hath fixed to the exercise of his Mercy and Judgment; but also teaches us that Salvation depends, not so much upon any external Relation or Denomination, as upon the eternal Obligations of Righteousness and Holiness.

This was the Second Head proposed to be Treated of; namely, the Conditions of the Divine Favour, expressed in the latter

latter part of the Text. *But in every Nation he that feareth him and worketh Righteouſneſs is accepted with him.* The favour of God is not now, as it ſeemed to be under the Jewiſh diſpenſation, annexed to a Family or a Nation, to external Badges and ritual Obſervations; but to the more noble and univerſal obligations of Fear and Righteouſneſs; offered and diſpenſed unto all Men upon the ſame Conditions; Conditions from which none can plead exemption, even although no Revelation had enforced them. They had then been Duties even without a Reward, but are now conditions of a Reward: which manifeſteth the infinite Mercy and Goodneſs of God, which is alſo enhanced by the univerſality of it; for that *in every Nation he that worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted by him.* Vol. I.

For after all, the Title to a Reward muſt be grounded upon the Divine acceptance, not on any merit of the Work.

But the time will not permit me to Diſcourſe farther of theſe things. I will only exhort you to make a juſt uſe of what you have already Learned, That *God is no reſpecter of Perſons.* This cannot but be a mighty encouragement to you to uſe your utmoſt diligence to attain that Reward, which God hath rendered equally poſſible

Vol. 1. possible to you, with those who are now the greatest Saints in Heaven; that whatever your condition or circumstances may be here below, God respecteth not that in distribution of his Favour, but only what *is* in your own power. On the other side, if you neglect these possible, these easie conditions of fearing God, and working Righteousness; flatter not your selves with the thoughts of being exempted by any peculiar Favour from undergoing that universal Sentence of Condemnation, which is indifferently pronounced against all Sinners. Which is also the conclusion drawn by St. *Peter* from this very consideration, 1 *Pet.* I. 17. *And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of Persons judgeth according to every Mans work, pass the time of your Sojourning here in fear.*

The

The Thirteenth SERMON.

PREACH'D

Easter-Day, 1689.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Coloss. III. 1.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

THE Resurrection of our Blessed Saviour from the Dead hath by the Church, in all Ages, been deservedly celebrated with a greater Solemnity, than any other Festival whatsoever; as being instituted in remembrance of the most signal Act of our Lord here on Earth, and the final Completion of our Redemption by it. Other Actions indeed prepared the Minds of his Followers to expect Salvation from him; but this alone gave them infalliable assurance of the performance of it.

Vol. 1. Till then they retained Doubts and Scruples; were meanly instructed in the Nature of his Office, and Design of his Coming; were confounded at his Ignominious Crucifixion; and began to suspect that they had been mistaken in the Person of the Messias. All their glorious hopes of a temporal Kingdom to be founded by their Lord and Master, were laid aside; and in a little time they began to doubt whether it were *he, that should have redeemed Israel.*

The Church then was not only dispersed but destroyed; and none left who would own their belief in a Crucified Saviour. The Apostles were fled: The Women prepared Spices for his Body now lying in the Grave, as not expecting it should rise again; and the Jews triumphed over his afflicted Disciples, as having defeated their hopes, and overthrown their Pretences.

At this time, in this State of things, our Lord rose from the Dead, and by his Resurrection demonstrated the Divinity of his Person, dispelled the Anxiety of his Disciples, and confounded his Enemies. By this he retrieved the lost Faith of his Followers, and put it beyond all possibility of being subject to any more Fluctuations. Hereby he not only gave the

the laſt and moſt infallible Confirmation to the truth of his Doctrine, by a Miracle unheard of in former Ages; but alſo eſtabliſhed in Mankind, the glad aſſurance of a future Reſurrection. He had before indeed promiſed it; but now gave an earneſt of it in his own Perſon, and manifeſted it to be poſſible by the actual effecting of it. Vol. 1.

No wonder then, that as the Church did at firſt receive our Lord from the Dead with unſpeakable Joy and Triumph; ſo it always continued to renew the remembrance of that Triumph by extraordinary Solemnities; that the Apoſtles urged the Miracle of his Reſurrection, as the higheſt Argument of Conviction to Jews and Gentiles; and admoniſhed their Diſciples to comfort one another with the Remembrance of it. And not only ſo, but alſo drew continual Arguments of Inſtruction and Motives of Holineſs from it, and made all the Myſteries and Sacraments of the Chriſtian Religion to be in ſome meaſure ſubſervient to it.

An Action of ſo great importance was not barely to ſtrike the Senſes, and to ſatisfie the doubtful, or convince the incredulous; but to affect the Soul, and become a Foundation of Practice, as well as Be-

Vol. I. lief to all Chriſtians. Our Lord raiſed not his natural Body from the Grave, to leave *us* his Myſtical Body groveling on the Ground; he reſumed not his bodily Life, to leave us in a ſpiritual Death; but taught us thereby to raiſe our Thoughts and Affections from the Earth; to free our ſelves from the Power of Darkneſs, and enter into the Regions of Light. For *we are riſen with Chriſt*, if we be true Chriſtians, as the Apoſtle aſſureth us in my Text; and if ſo, the natural conſequence will be, That *we ſeek thoſe things which are above*, and act agreeably to the new ſtate of Life into which we are entred. *If then ye be riſen with Chriſt, ſeek thoſe things which are above, where Chriſt ſitteth on the right hand of God.*

The words therefore will oblige me to treat Firſt of our Reſurrection with Chriſt; and Secondly, of the Concluſion drawn from thence by the Apoſtle, that we ought therefore *to ſeek thoſe things which are above.*

That we ſhall hereafter riſe and be with Chriſt, is the moſt firm Belief of all Chriſtians; but that we are already riſen, may not perhaps be ſo eaſily conceived, eſpecially by thoſe, who experience not in themſelves any Effects of this Bleſſed Reſurrection. We are therefore ſaid to riſe

riſe with Chriſt even in this Life, either by ſimilitude, or by hope; by mortifying and changing our former vicious Courſe of Life, into a new and Heavenly Life; or by conceiving firm hopes and aſſurance of the Divine Promiſes concerning our own Reſurrection, by the Example of our Lords Reſurrection. Vol. I.

The former manner indeed is purely Allegorical; but an Allegory as well moſt natural in its ſelf, as moſt familiar to the Apoſtle; who treats of it often and largely, and inculcates it in almoſt all his Epiſtles. As in the Chapter preceding my Text, he tells the *Coloſſians*, *Col.* II. 12, 20. *Ye are buried with him in Baptiſm, wherein alſo ye are riſen with him*; and *ye are dead with Chriſt from the Rudiments of the world*, Galat. II. 20. *I am Crucified with Chriſt.* Philip. III. 10. *That I may know him, and the power of his Reſurrection, and the fellowſhip of his ſufferings*; *being made conformable unto his Death*, 2 Cor. IV. 10. *Alway, bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jeſus*; *that the life alſo of Jeſus might be made manifeſt in our body.* But more eſpecially in the III. and IVth. Chapters of 1 *Pet.* and *Rom.* VI. this Conformity between our Lord and us in dying and riſing again is at large explained. *We were baptized into his death*; *therefore we are buried with him*

Vol. 1. *by Baptiſm into death; that like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the dead by the Glory of the Father; even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life*, &c.

Theſe Allegorical Concluſions were not the mere products of Fancy, but the deſigns of the Divine Wiſdom; which ſo admirably contrived the Chriſtian Religion, that all the Actions of our Saviours Life tend no leſs to our Inſtruction than his Precepts; and could not but have exceeding influence upon the Minds of Chriſtians, whoſe thoughts were *then*, and ought now to be, chiefly employed about our Saviours Reſurrection. They were excellently fitted to the Genius of the World at that time, when both Heathen Philoſophers, and Jewiſh Doctors employed themſelves almoſt wholly in Allegorical Explications of Natural or Divine Truths, and were more particularly adapted to the Religion of the *Jews*, and the Writings of the Old Teſtament concerning the Meſſias, conſiſting in Types, ſhadows and ſymbolical Repreſentations of things to come. And laſtly, leaſt we ſhould conceive any unreaſonable prejudice againſt theſe Allegorical inferences; beſides that they are recommended by the Authority of the Divine Pen-man, the preſent Allegory drawn from our Saviours

ours Reſurrection, doth moſt excellently deſcribe to us the Nature and Duties of our ſpiritual Regeneration; as it will appear, if we conſider it more fully. Vol. I.

The deſign of the Chriſtian Religion was to recover Mankind from his loſt Condition, free him from the Subjection of the Devil, reform his Life, and fit him for the Reception of thoſe infinite Benefits, which God had deſigned for him in another Life. To this end a total Deſertion of that corrupted ſtate of Life, wherein he was before engaged, was abſolutely neceſſary: As well in the Nature of the thing; it being wholly impoſſible that a vicious Soul ſhould receive that Reward; as by the Appointment of God, who had determined not to grant the Reward on any other Condition. And therefore our Saviour hath aſſured his Followers, That *unleſs a man be born again, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

It was required, that every one ſhould relinquiſh all thoſe temporal Enjoyments and Satisfactions, which were contrary either to Right Reaſon, or the expreſs Command of God; and becauſe the greateſt part of Mankind placed the whole Satisfaction of their Life in theſe unlawful Enjoyments; whoever renounced the uſe of them, might well be ſaid to die unto the world.

Vol. 1. And this was it, which all Christians were obliged to Promise at their Baptism, solemnly to renounce the World, the Flesh and the Devil, and give themselves wholly to a new Life instituted by God; which was excellently represented in the antient Form of Baptism, to which the Apostle in all the places before mentioned refers; wherein the Person baptized, was wholly immerged in the water; so that the Immersion represented his Resolution of dying to the World, and imitation of our Lord, who was by Death taken from the World; and then his Emersion presently following, signified his entrance into a new state of Life, and the Resurrection of our Saviour reviving and appearing after Death.

It is not sufficient therefore to mortifie one single Lust, or to give up this or that sinful Affection in exchange for eternal Rewards, and retain the rest. This is not to die in imitation of our Saviour; whose Soul was fully separated from his Body, and continued in a separate state till the Resurrection. He satisfied not himself to have endured Scourgings, Reproaches, and Buffettings; he descended not from the Cross, after he had endured most bitter Torments, till he had compleated his Sufferings by Death, and laid down his Life as a Sacrifice to God; which it could not

not be, till it were deſtroyed: It being the neceſſary Condition of all Sacrifices to be annihilated. If then *we be* really *baptized into his Death*; if we reſolve to offer up our ſelves a Sacrifice to God; we muſt yield up all our Pretences to the Pleaſures of this World, and enjoy no more of them than God permitteth to us; we muſt abſolutely free our ſelves from the Slavery of Sin and Satan, and devote our ſelves intirely to the Divine pleaſure. Vol. I.

To die unto the World ſuppoſeth a full Conviction, that the true Intereſt of a Chriſtian is not placed on Earth, and that his great Concern here is only to improve his ſhort term of Life to the Acquiſition of a more excellent and more durable Happineſs hereafter. From this perſwaſion it will eaſily follow, that different Intereſts from this are not to be purſued in this Life, which ought to be no other than a Preparation for a better. And herein a Chriſtian truly imitates the Death of his Lord and Saviour, who beſt of all manifeſted that *his Kingdom was not of this world* by laying down his Life willingly; that his Deſigns were far from founding an Empire, and procuring to himſelf worldly Advantages, when he ſubmitted to undergo the Pains of Death. Thereby teaching us, that we are not truly

Vol. 1. truly Crucified with him, until we as absolutely forſake all Deſires and Inclinations to our former ſinful Life, as if we were deprived of Life it ſelf; that we retain not the leaſt Claim or Title to our former vicious Satisfactions, but by a total relinquiſhing of them, even put it out of our Power to recal and re-eſtabliſh them.

In the next place, if we view the dreadful Horrour and Anxiety under which our Saviour laboured, while he bore the Sins of Mankind upon the Croſs; if we reflect on the Melancholy ſtate of the Church, his ignominious Condition, and the Triumphs of the infernal Powers, while he was detained in the Grave; we may perceive the deſperate and deplorable State of Man, while yet detained in Sin, labouring under the juſt Diſpleaſure of an angry God, and not broke looſe from the Chains and Dominion of the Devil. The ſtate of our Lord and his Church were indeed at that time in the higheſt confuſion: without any Conſolation, or apparent poſſibility of Recovery. Yet much greater is the Miſery of an unrepentant Sinner, who ſuffers all this thro' his own Fault, and until he be regenerate ſeeth no approaching Delivery.

From all theſe Calamities our Saviour and

and his Church were reſcued by his glori- Vol. 1.
ous Reſurrection. And from all theſe Miſeries is unhappy Man delivered by his Regeneration. Our Lord by his Reſurrection vindicated his Honour from the Blaſphemies of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, who had argued againſt his Divinity from the ſeeming Imperfections of his Sufferings; overthrew the deſign of wicked Spirits, endeavouring to defeat the Succeſs of his Miſſion by the Ignominy of the Croſs; and delivered his Church from that Diſgrace and Deſpair, which it had by his Death incurred. Such were the Benefits and Glories of this days Reſurrection; and no leſs are the Advantages of riſing with Chriſt from Sin unto a new Life, which removeth that Stain and Imperfection introduced into our Nature by Sin; reſtores it to that primitive Glory which it obtained in the State of Innocence; reſcueth us from the Slavery of the Devil; repairs the Honour and Integrity of our Souls; and renders us infinitely Happy, by making us Partakers of the Divine Favour.

For this was none of the leaſt Arguments, which inhanced the Glory of Chriſt's Reſurrection; that God by interpoſing in ſo extraordinary a manner in his behalf, evidently manifeſted how dear he was unto him, whom *he would not leave*

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Vol. 1. *in Hell*, in a ſtate of Diſgrace, *nor ſuffer to ſee corruption.* This raiſed him beyond the Degree of all mortal and corruptible Men, and placed him in ſuch an height of Glory, as cannot be reſembled by any thing but the Regeneration of a Chriſtian; wherein God interpoſeth by his Power, not ſo viſibly indeed, but no leſs miraculouſly, converting, aſſiſting and confirming him by his Grace; without which this admirable Change cannot be effected. A Change, which, however in an inferiour Degree, declares the Power and the Love of God, who produceth Habits of the moſt exalted Vertue in a Soul before overwhelmed with Sin and Wickedneſs.

For Reſurrection denotes not only a Deliverance from the Calamities of Death and Corruption, but alſo an enabling any one to renew an active Courſe of Life. Our Lord was not barely content to reſcue his Body from the Grave, and the inſults of his Enemies; but he carried it with him triumphantly into Heaven, and there ſitting at the right hand of God, employeth it in Conjunction with his Divine Nature to mediate continually the Redemption of Man. *If then we be riſen with Chriſt*, we muſt manifeſt the truth of our Reſurrection, by vital Actions proper to a new and ſpiritual Life, which are the Exerciſe

Exerciſe of all ſpiritual Vertues, and a ſtrict Conformity to the Laws of that new Society with Heaven, wherein we are engaged. Vol. I.

Farther, a bare recovery of Life deſerveth not the Title of a Reſurrection, for then the intermediate Death would have been of no advantage; at leaſt it reacheth not the illuſtrious Example of our Lord's Reſurrection; who after that was endued, with a far more glorious State than before his Death. Before his Crucifixion he was ſubject to all the Infirmities of humane Nature, Sin only excepted; after his Reſurrection exempted from them all. Before his Paſſion ſubject to change and decay, after his Reſurrection inſtated in an eternal and immutable Poſſeſſion of Glory. For as St. *Paul* amplifies this very matter, *Rom.* VI. 9. *Chriſt being raiſed from the dead, dieth no more; Death hath no more Dominion over him.*

His Life preceding and following his Reſurrection were infinitely different; that contemptible and mean, this glorious and terrible; that common with the reſt of Mankind, this exalted above all the Infirmities of humane Nature. And this is the Reaſon, why our Saviour converſed not openly among the *Jews* after his Reſurrection, as he had done before; from

Vol. I. from that time a new and different State of Life was to commence, never any more to be altered or relinquished. Whence we are taught, that to come up to the Resurrection of our Lord and Master, and express it nearly in our Lives, we ought to exceed what is required of us in a Natural State, and improve our Obedience farther than was exacted of us in a State, wherein no more than temporary Rewards were promised; at least that after our Entrance into a new Life, after our Profession of Christianity, we walk invariably whereunto we have attained; that we suffer not our selves to relapse into our former State, which we relinquished by dying with Christ; and deprive our selves of the Benefit of partaking in his Resurrection, by a similitude in this Life, which might otherwise secure to us a nearer imitation of him by a glorious Resurrection in the next.

Of this the Resurrection of our Lord giveth us the greatest assurance. Without that signal Confirmation of the truth of the Divine Promises Men would have been prone to dis-believe them. It seemed a matter incredible both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*, that God should after many Ages recollect the scattered parts of a dead Body, and reuniting them into their former Frame,

Frame, once more animate them with a living Soul. This to ſome ſeemed impoſſible, to others improbable. But both were refuted by the Example of our Lord's Reſurrection; which was to that purpoſe always urged by the Apoſtles in their Preaching, and is employed by St. *Paul* as the chief Argument againſt the incredulity of the *Corinthians*, in the 1 *Epiſt.* XV. Chapter. God had promiſed as well to raiſe up Mankind at the laſt day, as to raiſe up his Son on the Third day; and the certain Completion of this latter Promiſe ſecured the Belief of the former; there being no more effectual Argument to perſwade Men to rely upon the Promiſe of future Benefits, than to demonſtrate to them, how all preceding Promiſes were infallibly performed. And thus in ſome ſenſe all Mankind may be ſaid to riſe with Chriſt, inaſmuch as *Chriſt being riſen from the dead, is become the firſt fruits of them that ſlept*, 1 *Cor.* XV. 20. That as the whole Maſs is ſanctified by the Dedication of the firſt Fruits; ſo all Mankind received an earneſt of the Divine Promiſes concerning their Reſurrection, in the Perſon of Chriſt. Vol. 1.

But then in a more particular and proper manner, all faithful Chriſtians may be ſaid to riſe with Chriſt. There is a Reſurrection

Vol. I. ſurrection to Death as well as Life; a terrible as well as a deſirable Reſurrection. To riſe therefore with Chriſt, is the happy Reſurrection, and *That*, as St. *Peter* tells us, 1 *Epiſt.* I. 4. is to riſe *to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in Heaven for us.* That this will be the Reward of all good and pious Chriſtians, the Reſurrection of their Lord and Maſter is ſufficient aſſurance to them. To ſuch Chriſt is a Head; and what more natural than for the Members to follow their Head? He is the Captain of their Salvation; and what more conſiſtent than for Soldiers to follow their Captain? He is their forerunner; and what more uſual than for Travellers to follow their Leader, *a Forerunner who is for us entred*, *Hebr.* VI. 20. that is, to take Poſſeſſion in our Names, and for our behalf; agreeably to what himſelf had promiſed to his faithful Diſciples, that he departed from them into Heaven, only *to prepare* Manſions *for them*; and that *where he was, there they ſhould be alſo.*

How bleſſed and deſirable then ſhall the ſtate of the Faithful be after the Reſurrection, when they ſhall be made Companions with the Son of God, and even ſhare with him in his preſent Happineſs?

A

A Happineſs, which, however inconceivable in this Life, is excellently deſcribed by the Apoſtle in the latter Words of my Text, *where Chriſt ſitteth at the right hand of God. He ſitteth*, to denote the Permanence and Eternity of his Happineſs; and *at the right hand of God*, to ſhew the Power, Majeſty, and Glory, wherewith he is inveſted. Vol. 1.

Such were the glorious Conſequences of our Saviour's Reſurrection; and ſuch will be the bleſſed Effects of our's alſo, if we diligently obſerve the Apoſtle's Precept, which he infers from our riſing with Chriſt, That *we ſeek thoſe things which are above. If ye then be riſen with Chriſt, ſeek thoſe things which are above, where Chriſt ſitteth at the right hand of God.* Our Lord after his Reſurrection ſetled not his abode upon Earth, he ſtayed no longer than to inſtruct his Diſciples in the neceſſary Duties of their Miſſion, and convince them that he was really riſen. Even while he remained upon Earth, he was far more reſerved than before his Reſurrection; abſtained from a publick and ordinary Converſation, and reſumed not the common Offices of mortal Life, ſuch as eating and drinking, but only to convince his Followers of the reality of his Reſurrection. Not but that he might, if he had

Vol. I. pleaſed, continued all theſe Actions until his Aſcenſion, with the ſame Innocency and Freedom from Sin, which was inſeparable from his whole Life; but he choſe rather to teach us thereby, that after our new Birth and ſpiritual Reſurrection, we are not to imploy our Care and Affections in the things of this World; but living here as if we lived not, carry our Thoughts much higher, even whither he is gone before us, and fix them upon the Intereſts of Eternity. Not but that we may, and even ought to take a prudent Care for the Concerns of this World, while we are engaged in it; but that we ought not to reſt here, or make this our ultimate End; but make it the great buſineſs of our Lives to ſecure thoſe more noble Ends, which are propoſed to us, the Fruition of God, and Society of Chriſt in Heaven. This all will acknowledge to be our far greateſt Concern; and then ſurely our utmoſt Care ought to be employed in the Acquiſition of it. What we earneſtly love, we cannot but diligently ſeek; it being moſt true, That *where our treaſure is, there will our hearts be alſo.*

Deſire is the Spring of all Actions in us; and whatſoever we perform, even the moſt trifling Action, ariſeth from the deſire of ſome end to be obtained by it; ſo that

that we cannot be ſaid ſo much as to de- Vol. 1.
ſire the Joys of Heaven, if we diligent- ~~
ly ſeek not to obtain them, by all thoſe means which are poſſible to us and propoſed by God. If we retain an unlawful Love of the Pleaſures of this Life, it is manifeſt we prefer the Satisfaction proceeding from them, before the Concerns of the next; and however we be ſaid abſtractedly to deſire theſe, yet certainly in that Caſe we deſire them not in Compariſon of the other; nay, we even quit our deſire of them, which we may truly be ſaid to reject, when we eſpouſe an Intereſt, which we know to be utterly inconſiſtent with it. But far be this from any Chriſtian, to admire and celebrate the Glories of his Lord's Reſurrection, and yet refuſe the Offers of ſharing with him in it. We have all already, by our Baptiſm, and by aſſuming the Name of Chriſtians, profeſſed to die with Chriſt, and to riſe with him; and if we falſifie not theſe Reſolutions, we cannot but ſet our ſelves wholly to *ſeek thoſe things which are above.*

To die is to ſuſpend, or to ceaſe the ordinary Actions of Life; and if yet the Luſts of the World and the Fleſh be retained; if the ſame Care be employed on the Concerns of it, which were before any

Vol. 1. hopes of a future and better Life were given; if the ſame Love, the ſame deſire of earthly Satisfactions continue, ſuch a Perſon can no more be ſaid to have died to the World, than a *Body* to be naturally dead, which yet continueth to eat, and drink, and walk, and perform all the ordinary Actions of Life. *After thoſe things do the Gentiles ſeek*, who are *without God in the world*, who *have hope only in this Life*; who expect no Satisfaction, but what they reap here below. From theſe a Chriſtian ſeparates himſelf by his Baptiſm; profeſſeth himſelf a Member of a different Society, which proceeds upon contrary Principles, and foundeth his Intereſts in another Life. He abandons his Pretenſions to the unlimited Pleaſures of this Life, Crucifies his Affections, and *dieth* to the World, that he may riſe with Chriſt; riſe with him here to a new Life, that he may riſe with him to Glory hereafter.

In Confirmation of this bleſſed Hope, he often conſiders of his Lord's Reſurrection; he celebrates the Mercy and Faithfulneſs of God in comforting his afflicted Church as upon this Day, by reſtoring to her the Preſence of her Beloved Saviour: He thence conceiveth aſſured Hopes that himſelf ſhall in like manner be raiſed up at the laſt day. And now that the bodily

bodily Preſence of his Lord is after his Aſcenſion taken from him, he ſtrengthens his Faith, and confirms his Hope by the frequent Participation of the Holy Euchariſt, inſtituted in remembrance of him: He eſteemeth theſe ſacred Symbols received and eaten by him as an infallible Pledge of his own Reſurrection; agreeably to the Belief of the ancient Chriſtians, who accounted the Body and Blood of Chriſt delivered to the Faithful, to be a moſt certain earneſt of their future Reſurrection; as being perſwaded, that as God permitted not the natural Body of Chriſt to ſee Corruption; ſo neither will he ſuffer his Symbolical Body to be impriſoned in the Grave for ever. By the Reception of theſe ſacred Elements we are incorporated with Chriſt, and become Members of his Myſtical Body, and thereby obtain the higheſt Aſſurance that we can deſire, that as he raiſed up his own Body on the Third Day, ſo he will raiſe up us, who are thereby *Members of his Body*, in his due time. Only let us by dying to the World and living to him, by renouncing the inordinate Affections of the Fleſh, *ſeeking thoſe things which are above*, ſo fit our ſelves for the Reception of his Repreſentative Body in the Holy Sacrament, that we be not unworthy after Vol. I.

Vol. I. Death to be received unto the Society of his *Natural*, and now glorious Body in Heaven, *Where he ſitteth on the right hand of God.* To him with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be aſcribed all Honour, Power, and Glory, henceforth and for evermore.

The

The Fourteenth SERMON

PREACH'D

May 4th. 1689.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

John XIV. 1.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

OUR Lord and Saviour, being now ready to leave the World and return to his Father, endeavoured by many Preparatory Diſcourſes to confirm the Minds, and diſpel the Anxiety of his Diſciples, who began to deſpond at the News of his approaching Departure. This to them, not yet fully underſtanding the deſign of Chriſt's Coming, ſeemed a total Dereliction of them, and abandoning them to the World. They had forſaken all the preſent Conveniencies of Life, when they entred into the Number of his Diſciples; and had all along ſhared in the

Vol. 1. Miſeries and Hardſhips, that their Maſter was content to endure on Earth, in hopes of partaking at laſt in the Glories of that temporal Kingdom, which they fondly imagined he would found on Earth.

With theſe Hopes they ſupported themſelves under all their Calamities; and buſied themſelves in propoſing imaginary Methods of enjoying what they ſo long and ſo earneſtly expected. We find them diſputing who ſhould be the greateſt Officer, or the principal Favourite in this Kingdom; who ſhould ſit on his right hand and on his left. And now that after their Lord had entred into *Jeruſalem* in a triumphal manner, their Hopes were enhanced, and Expectations grew higher, as believing the Completion of them to be at hand, and that this glorious Kingdom of the Meſſias would immediately commence: When on a ſudden all their Hopes were daſhed, and their Imaginary Happineſs overthrown, by a free and open Declaration of their Lord concerning his Sufferings and ignominious Death, which now drew near, and were immediately to be accompliſhed. In what Confuſion and Anxiety muſt we then conceive them to have been, when not only their Hopes, and therein, in their own Opinion, the Fruits and Reward

ward of ſo many Labours, ſo much Hard- Vol. 1.
ſhip undertaken and endured in pro-
ſpect of their Preferment in a temporal Kingdom to be founded by their Maſter, were in an inſtant overthrown and cancelled: When not only themſelves were to be diſperſed, *as Sheep having no Shepheard*, expoſed to the Deriſion, Inſults and Perſecution of the *Jews*, who, as our Lord foretold, ſhould even force them to deny their Maſter, and thereby renounce all Title to any ſhare in the Glories of his Kingdom: When they were to be left alone without any Head to direct, comfort, and protect them: When not only all theſe Calamities were to come upon themſelves; but alſo their deareſt Lord and Maſter was to be delivered up to the Rage of wicked Men, to be treated with the utmoſt Indignities, and at laſt Crucified as a Malefactor? What Diſtraction muſt they then have ſuffer'd, when ſo many contrary Paſſions, Love of their Maſter, and Fear of their own Miſery, Deprivation of paſt Hopes, and Deſpair of future Happineſs wrought together in their Minds? They retained ſtill indeed ſome faint Hopes of the Reſurrection of their Lord, after three Days Impriſonment in the Grave, who ſhould then enter upon his Kingdom, and ſatisfie all their

Expe-

Vol. 1. Death to be received unto the Society of his *Natural*, and now glorious Body in Heaven, *Where he ſitteth on the right hand of God*. To him with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be aſcribed all Honour, Power, and Glory, henceforth and for evermore.

The

The Fourteenth SERMON

PREACH'D

May 4th. 1689.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

John XIV. 1.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

OUR Lord and Saviour, being now ready to leave the World and return to his Father, endeavoured by many Preparatory Diſcourſes to confirm the Minds, and diſpel the Anxiety of his Diſciples, who began to deſpond at the News of his approaching Departure. This to them, not yet fully underſtanding the deſign of Chriſt's Coming, ſeemed a total Dereliction of them, and abandoning them to the World. They had forſaken all the preſent Conveniencies of Life, when they entred into the Number of his Diſciples; and had all along ſhared in the

Vol. 1. Miſeries and Hardſhips, that their Maſter was content to endure on Earth, in hopes of partaking at laſt in the Glories of that temporal Kingdom, which they fondly imagined he would found on Earth.

With theſe Hopes they ſupported themſelves under all their Calamities; and buſied themſelves in propoſing imaginary Methods of enjoying what they ſo long and ſo earneſtly expected. We find them diſputing who ſhould be the greateſt Officer, or the principal Favourite in this Kingdom; who ſhould ſit on his right hand and on his left. And now that after their Lord had entred into *Jeruſalem* in a triumphal manner, their Hopes were enhanced, and Expectations grew higher, as believing the Completion of them to be at hand, and that this glorious Kingdom of the Meſſias would immediately commence: When on a ſudden all their Hopes were daſhed, and their Imaginary Happineſs overthrown, by a free and open Declaration of their Lord concerning his Sufferings and ignominious Death, which now drew near, and were immediately to be accompliſhed. In what Confuſion and Anxiety muſt we then conceive them to have been, when not only their Hopes, and therein, in their own Opinion, the Fruits and Reward

ward of ſo many Labours, ſo much Hard- Vol. 1.
ſhip undertaken and endured in pro-
ſpect of their Preferment in a temporal Kingdom to be founded by their Maſter, were in an inſtant overthrown and cancelled: When not only themſelves were to be diſperſed, *as Sheep having no Shepheard*, expoſed to the Deriſion, Inſults and Perſecution of the *Jews*, who, as our Lord foretold, ſhould even force them to deny their Maſter, and thereby renounce all Title to any ſhare in the Glories of his Kingdom: When they were to be left alone without any Head to direct, comfort, and protect them: When not only all theſe Calamities were to come upon themſelves; but alſo their deareſt Lord and Maſter was to be delivered up to the Rage of wicked Men, to be treated with the utmoſt Indignities, and at laſt Crucified as a Malefactor? What Diſtraction muſt they then have ſuffer'd, when ſo many contrary Paſſions, Love of their Maſter, and Fear of their own Miſery, Deprivation of paſt Hopes, and Deſpair of future Happineſs wrought together in their Minds? They retained ſtill indeed ſome faint Hopes of the Reſurrection of their Lord, after three Days Impriſonment in the Grave, who ſhould then enter upon his Kingdom, and ſatisfie all their Expe-

Vol. 1. Expectations; but alas even theſe remaining Hopes are diſſipated by our Saviour's acquainting them in this Chapter, that immediately after his Reſurrection he was *to leave the World, and go unto the Father.*

In this diſconſolate Condition of the Church, our Lord ſeeks to chear up the Spirits and remove the Deſpair of his Followers; by repreſenting to them the Neceſſity of his Suffering, That *thus it was written, and that thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer*; by giving them the Promiſe of the Holy Ghoſt, who ſhould both Comfort, Inſtruct and Guide them; by aſſuring them this Comforter could not be ſent, until himſelf firſt returned to the Father, and by his Interceſſion ſhould obtain the Miſſion of him; that although his Bodily Preſence ſhould be taken from them, yet that it was for their good; and that he would ever continue to be preſent with them, by the Influences of his Government and Bleſſed Spirit, by interceding for them continually with the Father, by promoting their Requeſts in the Court of Heaven, by pouring down his Gifts and Graces on them, and watching over them with a conſtant Eye of Providence; but above all, in preparing Manſions for them in Heaven, to receive them

them after Death, and the Final Comple- Vol. 1.
tion of their Labours upon Earth.

Upon all these Accounts he bids them not be troubled in their Hearts for his Departure, and the Temporal Calamities which they fancied would ensue upon it; and for an Argument of Consolation, says to them, *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.* As if he should say, You cannot deny that it is both your Duty, and Safety also to trust in God, considered only as the Creator and Governor of the World; to resign up your Wills to his Disposal, and upon firm Assurance, that he both knoweth and willeth what is best for you, rest contented in all the various Conditions of Life. If you consider him as the Author of your Religion, in which ye have been brought up, ye have yet much greater Reason to rely upon his Care and Providence in all doubtful Cases and Distresses; as having often experienced his peculiar Kindness to your Church and Nation, in many and wonderful Instances, which were therefore at first recorded, that ye might from thence receive assured Hope of the Divine Goodness and Providence, interposing in your behalf in all Calamities; as it is in the LXXVIII *Psalm. He gave Israel a law, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their Children: To the intent,*

Vol. 1. *intent, that when they came up, they might ſhew their Children the ſame. That they might put their Truſt in God, and not to forget the Works of God.* If for theſe Reaſons you are content to truſt in God, and depend on him for Relief in your Afflictions; for much greater Reaſons ye ought to confide and relye upon my Promiſes of Aſſiſtance to you, and conſtant Care of you, even after I ſhall be removed from you; inaſmuch as ye have received from me more manifeſt Aſſurances of the peculiar Favour of God to you, than ever were indulged to any part of Mankind, to the Patriarchs or the *Jews*.

My Ability to do all this you cannot doubt; As knowing who I am, and what place I bear in Heaven; or if ye ſhould not believe this merely for the Conſideration of the Divinity of my Perſon, yet *believe me for the very Works ſake*, Ver. 11. being convinced by ſo many Miracles, as I have wrought for your Satisfaction; that I am able to perform whatſoever I promiſe to you. And then for my willingneſs to do it, you have all along experienced my Affection to you; and if you do ſtill doubt, I do now give you freſh Aſſurances. For *if it were not ſo, I would have told you*, Verſe 2. *And if ye ſhall ask any thing in my name, I will do it*, Verſe 14. Even my

my Crucifixion is for your ſake, for to purchaſe Redemption for you; and after that, my return into Heaven is for your ſake alſo, to ſecure your Reward, and prepare you Manſions there. *For in my Father's houſe are many Manſions:* As it followeth in the ſecond Verſe. I go not to take Poſſeſſion of the Joys of Heaven for my ſelf alone, but in your Name alſo, and in your behalf. *Let not your Hearts therefore be troubled*, neither be diſtracted with the Afflictions that may fall upon you. For whatſoever Shocks you may meet with in this World; although you be perſecuted, injured, and oppreſſed; let not this afflict you, or cauſe you to deſpair; this is not your abiding place, your Manſion is in Heaven: let this be your Conſolation. Vol. 1.

This was abundantly ſufficient to diſpel the Anxiety, and raiſe the drooping Spirits of the Apoſtles; and not only ſo, but alſo in ſome manner to ſupport all faithful Chriſtians in difficult Emergencies to all ages. This was ſpoken indeed to the Apoſtles, but *written for our Inſtruction*, whom it doth no leſs concern. For the Church ſucceeding the Apoſtles, was not by any peculiar Priviledge exempted from Difficulties and Diſaſters. The Promiſes made unto her were not to take place in this

this Life; and therefore if ſhe were aſſaulted with Tempeſts, and oppreſſed by the Malice of Men or Devils, ſhe ſuffers no more, than her Lord and Maſter did before her; than her Founders, and his beloved Diſciples alſo did. A greater Calamity cannot befall the Church, than what befell the Apoſtles at this time: Nay, all that ever the Church ſuffered, all that it can ſuffer, come far beneath it: and yet our Saviour thought this Conſideration a ſufficient Remedy to their Affliction. Much more therefore will it ſuffice to remove our leſſer Troubles, and continue a conſtant Quiet and Tranquility in our Minds, who are Followers of the ſame Faith, and Heirs of the ſame Hopes. And that it may do ſo, I will take Occaſion from the Text to diſcourſe of theſe two Heads.

I. What Reaſon and Ground Natural Religion, or the Moſaick Diſpenſation giveth us to truſt in God, and receive Comfort from thence in all Difficulties in the Apprehenſion of Calamities; inſinuated in thoſe Words, *Ye believe in God.*

II. What Force the Chriſtian Religion hath ſuperadded to theſe Reaſons of Truſt and Conſolation, *Believe alſo in me.*

Firſt then, What Reaſon, *&c.* I joyn Natural Religion, and that of the *Jews* herein

herein together, becauſe no certain Hopes or Promiſe of Happineſs in another Life were given to either; and upon that Account the Reaſons of depending upon God in this Life were common to both. The *Jews* indeed had ſtronger Reaſon to rely upon the Divine Providence, as having had more frequent and apparent Experience of it; but it was a Reaſon of the ſame kind with that common to Natural Religion; which proceedeth no farther with any certainty, than the conſideration of the Divine Government of the World in this preſent Life. Vol. I.

Let us then enter into the ſame Conſideration; where the firſt thought, which preſents it ſelf, will be, that ſince God created Man by his own good Pleaſure, and continueth to govern him and all other parts of the Creation, according to his own Primary Decrees, it is but reaſonable that Men ſhould acquieſce in the Laws of his Government. For if God beſtowed on him the Benefit of Exiſtence, and continueth it by a conſtant Preſervation, he may juſtly expect that Man ſhould thankfully receive that Benefit, without repining that it was no greater. All other parts of the Creation perform their Duties without Variance in their ſeveral Stations and Capacities; and

if

Vol. I. if Man alone desires, that his Station may be changed, his Post removed, he shews himself unworthy even of the first Benefit, I mean that of Existence; much more of any extraordinary Acts of Favour to be wrought by God in his behalf. The meanest and most miserable Member of Mankind, excluding his Sins, which are the Product of his own Choice, is far more happy than any other part of the visible World; as enjoying a noble and capacious Soul; which is capable of receiving true Happiness, if directed aright, or at least pleasing it self with a mistaken Happiness; a Priviledge which is denied to the irrational part of the Creation; which however many of them have more exquisite and accurate Organs of Sense than Men, yet thence receive neither real nor imaginary Happiness, because not reflecting on any Perceptions of Sense.

After all, let the Afflictions of any private Man be never so heavy; yet it cannot be denied, that the more noble part of him, the Soul, is still at Liberty to improve its more real Happiness, and not subject to any of those Calamities any farther, than it shall immerge, or interest it self in the Concerns of the Body. And even this is no small Consolation, that in all the Misfortunes of this Life, we perform the

the Will of God, in executing that Station, which his Providence hath appointed us in the World. And that this Station is fittest for us, we must believe, if we reflect on the perfection of the Divine Wisdom; if not fittest for us simply, and in its own Nature, yet in Conjunction with all other Circumstances; it being not reasonable that we should at all times expect the interruption of the publick Government of the World for our private Concerns. Vol. 1.

Indeed it must be acknowledged, that as God is the absolute Governour of the world, so he is also infinitely Just and Holy; which may incourage Men, who have no knowledge of Rewards or Punishments in another Life, to expect, that he should, in an extraordinary manner in this Life, interpose in behalf of good Men, and against bad Men. So that however the former Consideration may remove the Anxiety of Men; yet nothing less than an assured belief of this latter will ever perswade them to trust in God, which supposeth the hopes of some extraordinary Assistance or proceeding in the World. And therefore such extraordinary influences were actually confered upon the *Jews*, whose Obedience, or Disobedience was commonly attended with temporal Rewards or Punishments. But this was in Vertue of a particular Co-

Vol. 1. venant; which, admitting no better hopes, confined it self to the Concerns of this Life; and after all, received frequent Exceptions and Variations; many wicked Men among them living in Plenty, and dying in Peace; and others of eminent Sanctity persecuted, oppressed, and at last unjustly Slain.

So that only probable Motives of trust in God remained in that Dispensation under the Law; as, because Peace or Misery did for the most part accompany Virtue or Vice: and *this* even those, who followed the Dictates only of natural Religion, in some measure had; who have often taken notice of singular instances of Providence in reward of the good, and Punishment of the bad: And related not only particular Examples of this kind, but also from the frequency of them formed and delivered general Rules, that Wickedness never escapeth unpunished, or Innocence unrewarded.

In short, it is the indispensable Duty of Man to Act cheerfully and submissively in that Station, or in those Circumstances wherein the supreme Author of Life hath placed him; to receive not only without murmuring, but also with Reverence, all Dispensations proceeding from him. He hath just ground to believe that God will not forsake him, if sincerely putting his

his Truſt in him, nor ſuffer his Inno- Vol. 1.
cence to paſs unregarded; which is a ſuf-
ficient Motive of relying on his Providence,
and a neceſſary one of ſubmitting to it.
But the certain and infallible aſſurance of
theſe Hopes, the exact knowledge of the
methods of Providence in this matter, and
the unerring experience of the Divine Ju-
ſtice and Goodneſs herein, is to be found
only in the Chriſtian Religion: And that
it is abundantly found there, I come next to
ſhew, by conſidering in the ſecond place.

II. What force and weight the Chri-
ſtian Religion hath ſuperadded to the na-
tural or precedent Reaſons and grounds
of Truſt and reliance in God, and therein
of Conſolation in Dangers and Afflictions.
In the Natural, or under the Moſaick
Law, the apparent hopes of Mankind were
terminated in this Life; and although the
common Notions of the perfection of
the Divine Juſtice, and the viſible expe-
rience of the great Diſproportion in the
diſtribution of Rewards and Puniſhments
in this Life, induced many to believe,
that a more equal and impartial Survey
of the Actions of Men would be taken
after Death; and the Soul of Man, which
is not capable of Diſſolution, receive then
the merits or demerits of its Actions: as
conſidering Men could not but eſteem

Vol. I. this as moſt rational in it ſelf ſo not unlikely; yet the perſwaſions of it were in the *Gentiles* little more than ſome faint Hopes and wiſhes, and in the *Jews* wrapt up in obſcure Prophecies, or uncertain Interpretations. But in the Chriſtian Religion, theſe Conjectures being advanced into certainty, theſe Hopes into aſſurance; the reliance and truſt in God conſequent to them, which in the former could not but be faint and weak, became now lively and vigorous.

To a Chriſtian, who profeſſeth himſelf *a ſtranger and Pilgrim in the earth*, who diſowns the placing of his hopes on this ſide Heaven, it ſeems not ſtrange, that God ſhould ſuffer him to labour under Difficulties and Calamities; ſince theſe affect not his grand Concern, hinder not his real Happineſs, and many times tend highly to promote it. In taking that Profeſſion on him, he renounced the immoderate Love of the World, the gratifying his Luſts, and the eaſe of his Body; profeſſed himſelf *a Citizen of another Country*, and liſted himſelf under the Banner of a Crucified Saviour; and in Vertue of theſe Reſolutions proceeds in a ſteady courſe of Vertue and Holineſs to attain his end; is not amazed at any Terrours or Diſaſters, which

which may meet him in the way; declines them indeed as far as Prudence will permit, but will not forſake the right way to avoid them. A natural conſequence to a firm Belief in God and Chriſt, and that Opinion which is rooted in all true Chriſtians, that the real Happineſs and perfection of Man is to be expected in another Life; that Croſſes and Afflictions in this world hinder not the Acquiſition of this ſupreme Good, and oft-times promote it. Vol. 1.

If publick Calamities invade the Church, if private Miſeries affect himſelf, a ſincere Chriſtian is neither ſcandalized at the one, nor Deſpairs through the other. He conſiders, that if he *ſuffers for the name of Chriſt, he is happy*; if upon any other account, without his own fault, his Affliction may be of uſe to him, may correct his wandring thoughts, and fix his hope upon God alone; but that in no Caſe it tends to deprive him of his chief and ultimate End, the Fruition of God in another Life. The exceeding Happineſs of that Fruition ſo infinitely ſurpaſſeth all the Petty ſatisfactions of this World, and the Duration of it the continuance of this Life; that no Affliction, no Calamity ſo grievous, can happen to any one, which will not ſeem light un-

Vol. 1. der the apprehenſion of thoſe Bleſſed Hopes. Men may leſſen our Enjoyments here below; but yet notwithſtanding the Rage or Envy of Men, it is in our Power to augment and improve them above. For ſo the Fathers do generally expound the Promiſe of our Saviour following the Text: *In my Fathers houſe are many Manſions*; that is, in Heaven are many and different Degrees of Glory prepared for you, to be diſtributed according to your greater or leſs perfection in Holineſs. This is the only Ambition worthy of a Chriſtian, to aim at an eminent Station in that Bleſſed place, where Preference will be no Injury to another, nor diminſh another's Happineſs; contrary to the proceedings of this World, where the greatneſs or eſtate of one Man can be raiſed no otherwiſe than upon the Ruins or Decay of another.

It can ſcarce be hoped indeed, nor is it expected by God, that Man ſhould free himſelf abſolutely from all concern for things here below. Such impoſſibility will be one of our chief Perfections, when our Nature ſhall be raiſed above this corruptible Condition, and become ſpiritualized; but to aim at it in this Life may perhaps be an impoſſible Deſign, but certainly not our Duty. We are here Citizens

tizens of the whole World, and as ſuch, bound to ſeek the good of Mankind in general; Members of a Civil Society, and as ſuch, obliged to promote the Peace and Welfare of our Country; Members of a Chriſtian Church, and as ſuch, commanded to Labour for the external Peace and Proſperity of *Jeruſalem*; Laſtly, in our own private Capacities. God deſigned at leaſt ſome ſort of Happineſs even in this Life for Man, when he placed him in the World; and this we may lawfully purſue and improve, as far as the Rules of Juſtice, Sobriety, and Religion will permit. To be unconcerned in all theſe is ſo far from being a Duty, or required by God, that in moſt Caſes it may become a Crime. Vol. I.

But the Exhortation of our Saviour in this place, and the Precepts of the Chriſtian Religion in general, require us not to be anxious and ſollicitous about any Contingencies on this ſide Heaven: Not to ſuffer our ſelves to be ſo tranſported with Paſſions, ariſing from either the Senſe or the proſpect of unhappy Accidents in this World, as may embroil our minds, diſturb our thoughts, and hinder the performance of more noble and Divine Duties: much leſs to conclude our ſelves unhappy, to deſpond and murmur, to re-

Vol. I. pine at the publick Government of the World, and diſtract the Soul with Melancholy thoughts of private miſ-fortunes. Such a Perturbation of mind would be moſt unworthy a rational Man; much more a knowing Chriſtian, who cannot but be convinced, that it is in his own Power to render himſelf truly happy, notwithſtanding all the oppoſition of Men or Devils; and amidſt all the Diſaſters of Fortune, the Injuries of Men, and Calamities of this Life, to *preſs forward toward the Mark of his high calling*, and attain the Reward of his Labours.

But the chief deſign of our Lord in theſe words, was to warn his Diſciples to avoid that common Errour, to which Mankind is ſo prone, of concluding from private Miſ-fortunes or publick Calamities, that God hath forſaken them, and withdrawn his Protection and delivered them up to the Will of their Enemies, to Deſpair and Miſery. Men are ſo much inured to paſs Judgments from the report of their Senſes, that they are apt falſly to perſwade themſelves that God hath diſowned them, and withdrawn the influences of his Favour, as often as he interpoſeth not his Power in a viſible manner to reſcue them from Injuries and Oppreſſions, from Miſeries and Miſ-fortunes. Thus the Apoſtles receiving

ceiving the News of their Lord's intenti- Vol. 1.
ons to leave the Earth, and return to Heaven, could hardly be induced to believe, that when he had removed his Bodily Preſence from them, he would continue his Care of them, or Favour to them. They abandoned themſelves to Grief and Deſpair, gave up themſelves for loſt, and began to queſtion the ſincerity of his Love and reality of his Promiſes. It was indeed ſo great an Affliction to the Apoſtles to be deprived of the Bleſſed Preſence of their beloved Maſter, that no Chriſtian ſince thoſe days, can pretend to have endured ſuch a Loſs; but in a Chriſtian, aſſured of the Promiſes of another Life, knowing the Nature of true Happineſs, and the method directed by Chriſt to attain it, it is inexcuſable to form an Opinion of the diſ-favour of God from temporal Afflictions.

According to the ordinary Courſe of the World, it cannot but happen that Misfortunes will attend the beſt of Men, and whole Societies be involved in general Calamities. But then none will preſume to ſay, that it is convenient that the fixed and conſtant Courſe of the World ſhould be violated to ſatisfie theſe particular Caſes.

The Preſervation of the publick Order of the World, and general Laws of Pro-

dence,

Vol. 1. vidence, is a matter of greater Concern than the relief of particular Irregularities. It is ſufficient to manifeſt both the Juſtice and the Wiſdom of God, that he hath ſettled ſuch Laws of Government in the World, that all Men may, if they pleaſe, make themſelves truly Happy; none become truly miſerable, but through their own default. We believe indeed that God doth often, even in this World, interpoſe in an extraordinary manner in behalf of his Church or faithful Servants; but the Motives and Cauſes of the Divine Conduct herein, may be ſo various and different, that no certain Argument of favour or diſfavour can be drawn from them. He may bring Miſ-fortunes upon pious Men to Correct them, to reſtrain their Paſſions, or afford them opportunity of improving particular Vertues and Duties. He may confer temporal Felicity on wicked Men, to oblige them by Benefits to Repentance, or to ſerve and promote ſome wonderful Ends in the Government of the World or the Church, which they little think of, and contribute to it without their knowledge. He may puniſh the good in this Life, for their ſins of Omiſſion, Paſſion, or Inadvertency, that ſo he may Reward them in the next, for their more conſtant and regular Courſe of

of Piety. He may reward bad Men in this Life, for those few good Actions which they do; that so he may leave them without excuse, when he shall punish them in another World for their habitual Wickedness and Disobedience. He may continue their present Condition, whether of Riches or Poverty to either; because he, who knoweth the Constitutions and Hearts of all Men, foresees that the one would not be able to continue his Innocence, and the other grow much worse, in a different state of Life. He may punish with general Calamities, the Sins and Corruptions of publick Societies, which cannot be punished as such in another Life; and it is not reasonable, that any good Men, who share in the Society, should require to be exempted by so many private Miracles from the universal Calamity. Vol. 1.

The Church of Christ hath received indeed many and great Promises of particular Favour and Assistance. But then it is not necessary that this Divine Favour should exert it self in bestowing of temporal Prosperity. Affliction and Persecution may be sometimes far more convenient to the Church, to restore her decayed Discipline, to revive her languishing Zeal, to awaken the negligent, to separate the false, to reform

all

Vol. 1. all the Members of it. The Church hath indeed experienced in all Ages manifeſt interpoſitions of Divine Providence in favour of her: She hath been often freed in an extraordinary manner from the Rage of her Perſecutors, the deſigns of Apoſtates, and infection of Hereticks. *Kings have been her nurſing Fathers, and Queens her nurſing Mothers*; She hath ſurmounted the oppoſition of all her Enemies, and through an uninterrupted Courſe of many Ages, enjoyed both the Bleſſings of the Earth, and the Hopes of Heaven.

The Apoſtles, reduced at the Crucifixion and Departure of our Lord to that miſerable Condition, which we before repreſented, were comforted, and re-animated by the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, at the approaching Feaſt of *Pentecoſt*. Heaven then declared for them, by confering extraordinary Gifts of knowledge on them, and afterward by confirming their Preaching, with no leſs wonderful Miracles; which removed their Anxiety, convinced them that the Love of their Maſter now in Heaven, was both continued and increaſed to them, and enabled them to ſubdue the victorious Roman Empire, to the Laws and the Name of Chriſt. And leaſt we ſhould imagine the Arm of God to be ſhortned to us, we of this Church

Church and Nation have been more than once, even in this Age, delivered in an extraordinary manner from Danger of Popery on the one hand, and Fanaticiſm on the other. But from hence we are not to raiſe confident aſſurances, that God will always continue the ſame Proſperity to his Church. He hath promiſed indeed, that the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it; that the Faith ſhall never be wholly deſtroyed; nor a Succeſſion of Paſtors wanting to preach the Word, and adminiſter the Sacraments; but has no where engaged, that ſhe ſhall always enjoy the Protection of the Civil Power, and the Bleſſings of outward Peace. External Grandeur and Happineſs is not neceſſary to the being of a Church; which may be found in the Wilderneſs, as well as in the Land of Reſt; in *an upper Chamber*, as well as in a ſtately Temple. Vol. 1.

After all, we muſt acknowledge our ſelves not to be merely Paſſive, in receiving the influences of the Divine Care and Providence. Our Lord bids us not be troubled nor torment our ſelves with over-much Anxiety, in Confidence of his Protection, and aſſurance of his deſigned Rewards; but then at the ſame time he requires as a Condition, or Qualification of us, *Ye believe in God: believe alſo in me.* Belief

Vol. I. Belief is an active Principle, and includeth Hope, the great Spring and Motive of all humane Undertaking. We know, that we cannot attain the ſpiritual Rewards of another Life without our own diligent Endeavours; and it is no leſs vain to expect from God any temporal Benefits, ſuch as Peace, Protection and Security, to our ſelves in particular, and the Church in general, without addreſſing our ſelves by all poſſible means and induſtry to the Acquiſition of them. One of theſe means, and that the moſt effectual, our Saviour propoſeth to us in the end of this Diſcourſe, *Verſe* 13. *Whatſoever ye ſhall ask in my Name, that will I do.*

May God therefore, of his infinite Mercy, Grant that the Courſe of this World may be ſo peaceably ordered, that we may not be diſtracted by Trouble and Anxieties; may he defend and protect his Church from the rage and deſigns of her Enemies; may we ſo paſs through things temporal, that we finally loſe not the things eternal; for the ſake of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, to whom with the Father, *&c.*

FINIS.

Books Publiſhed by the Reverend Mr. Henry Wharton, *and Printed for* Ri. Chiſwell.

Anglia Sacra, five Collectio Hiſtoriarum, partim Antiquitus partim recenter Scriptarum, de Archiepiſcopis & Epiſcopis Angliæ, a prima Fidei Chriſtianæ Suſceptione ad annum 1540. nunc primum in lucem editarum, in 2 Vol. Fol. 1691.

The Hiſtory of the Troubles and Tryal of the moſt Reverend Father in God *William Laud*, Lord Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*: Wrote by himſelf, during his Impriſonment in the *Tower*: Fol. 1695.

Jacobi Uſſerii Armachani Archiepiſcopi Hiſtoria Dogmatica Controverſiæ inter Orthodoxos & Pontificios de Scripturis & Sacris Vernaculis: Nunc primum Edita. Acceſſerunt ejuſdem Diſſertationes duæ de Pſeudo Dionyſii Scriptis & de Epiſtola ad Laodicenos antehac ineditæ. Deſcripſit, digeſſit, & notis atque Auctario Locupletavit *Henricus Wharton*. Quarto. 1689.

A Brief Declaration of the Lords Supper, written by Dr. *Nicholas Ridley*, Biſhop of *London*, during his Impriſonment, with ſome Determinations and Diſputations concerning the ſame Argument, by the ſame Author, 4to. 1688.

A *Popiſh* Pamphlet Intituled. *Speculum Eccleſiaſticum*: Or, *an Eccleſiaſtical Proſpective Glaſs*, conſidered in its falſe Reaſonings and Quotations. There are added, by way of Preface, two further Anſwers, the Firſt to the Defender of the *Speculum*, the Second to the *Half ſheet* againſt the *Six Conferences*. Quarto, 1688.

The Enthuſiaſm of the Church of *Rome*, Demonſtrated in ſome Obſervations upon the Life of *Ignatius Loyola* (Founder of the *Jeſuits Order*.) 4to. 1688.

Hiſtoria de Epiſcopis & Decanis *Londinenſibus*: Nec non de Epiſcopis & Decanis *Aſſavenſibus*: A Prima ſedis utriuſque Fundatione ad Annum 1540. Acceſſit Appendix duplex Inſtrumentorum Quorundam inſignium, ad utrumque Hiſtoriam Spectantium, 8vo. 1695.

Other

Other Books lately Printed for Richard Chiſwell.

ARchbiſhop *Tenijon's* Nine Sermons on ſeveral Occaſions, *Quarto.*

Dr. *Burton's* Sermons in Two Volumes, *Octavo.* Publiſhed by Dr. *Tillotſon.*

Biſhop *Williams's* Twelves Sermons at Eſq; *Boyles* Lecture, for 1695, and 1696.

Biſhop *Patrick's* Hearts Eaſe, or Remedies againſt all Trouble.

——His Commentaries on *Geneſis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*, in Five Vol. 4to.

——His Ten Sermons on ſeveral Occaſions, 4to.

Seven Volumes of Archbiſhop *Tillotſon's* Diſcourſes, Publiſhed ſince his Death, by his Chaplain Dr. *Barker.*

——The Eighth Volume (which is upon Repentance) is in the Preſs.

Twenty Eight Sermons of Biſhop *Burnet*, on ſeveral Occaſions, 4to.

——His Expoſition of the 39 Articles of the Church of *England*, Fol. 1700.

Memorials of *Thoms* Lord *Fairfax*; Written by Himſelf.

Dr. *Fryers* Nine Years Travel into *India* and *Perſia.* Illuſtrated with Copper Plates, *Fol.* 1698.

The Life of *Henry Chichele* Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*, in which there is a particular Relation of many Remarkable Paſſages in the Reigns of *Henry* V. and VI. Kings of *England*: written in Latin by *Arthur Duck*, L L. D. Chancellor of the Dioceſs of *London*, and Advocate of the Court of Honour; now made Engliſh, and a Table of Contents annexed, 8*vo.* 1699.

The Life of *John Whitgift* Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*, in the the times of Queen *Elizabeth*, and King *James* I. Written by Sir *Geo. Paul*, Comptroler of His Grace's Houſhold. To which is annexed a Treatiſe intituled, Conſpiracy for pretended Reformation, written in the Year, 1591. by *Richard Coſin*, L L. D. Dean of the Arches, and Official Principal to Archbiſhop *Whitgift*, 8vo. 1699.

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